

Jordan Times

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Volume 22 Number 6458

AMMAN THURSDAY-FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 20-21, 1997, SHAWWAL 13-14, 1417

Price: Jordan 200 Fils

Arabs agree to set up free trade zone

CAIRO (AFP) — Arab economy ministers agreed in talks here Wednesday on the creation of a much-delayed free trade zone and the project will be launched Jan. 1, 1998, United Arab Emirates (UAE) Economy Minister Said Ghobash said. "We announce the creation of a greater Arab free trade zone over the next 10 years starting Jan. 1, 1998," Mr. Ghobash told reporters at the Cairo headquarters of the Arab League. Custom duties will be reduced gradually by 10 per cent each year over the next decade, he said, calling on all Arab countries, financial organisations and other specialised groups to take the necessary steps. A ministerial committee chaired by Jordan and comprising Egypt, Syria, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia and the UAE will follow up on the decision. A call for the creation of an Arab free trade zone was first launched 50 years ago. Inter-Arab trade represents only 10 per cent of trade relations between the Arab countries and other nations, the secretary general of the Arab League's Council of Arab Economic Unity, Hassan Ibrahim said.

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Special Forces unit leaves for Bosnia

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah Ben Al Hussein, commander of the Special Forces, on Wednesday saw off a Special Forces unit which left for Bosnia to take part in the peacekeeping forces there along with French troops. Prince Abdullah voiced appreciation of the Special Forces and thanked them for their noble efforts to safeguard peace.

Ciller cleared of doubts over assets

ANKARA (AFP) — The Turkish parliament on Wednesday cleared Foreign Minister Tansu Ciller of charges of corruption regarding her personal assets. Deputy Speaker Kamer Genc said Parliament had on Tuesday cleared Mrs. Ciller of corruption charges over the dealings of a state-run company and a privatisation process during her time as prime minister. On Tuesday deputies from Mrs. Ciller's conservative True Path Party and her coalition partners, the pro-Islamic Welfare Party of Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan, voted to clear her. Most of the opposition supported calls for her to face trial. Had the opposition managed to gather 276 votes in the 550-seat parliament, Ms. Ciller would have been sent for trial by the constitutional court, Turkey's highest judicial body. Under Turkey's constitution, any official convicted by the constitutional court is barred from active politics.

Seven Palestinians arrested in police sweep

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Palestinian police arrested seven members of a hardline Palestinian faction opposed to Yasser Arafat's peace deals with Israel in a sweep across the West Bank, security sources said on Wednesday. Police arrested the members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC) during raids on their homes Tuesday night in the self-rule areas of Bethlehem, Ramallah and Jenin. The houses of the members of the Damascus-based group were also searched, the sources said, without giving a reason for the arrests. The Palestinian security agencies have over the past year arrested dozens of militants from opposition groups in a general crackdown, although most have since been released. Amnesty International has accused the security services of the Palestinian National Authority of indiscriminately arresting its political opponents and detaining them without charge.

Europeans fund Palestinian academy

GAZA CITY (AFP) — European Nations agreed Wednesday to give the Palestinians \$8 million to build a police academy in the West Bank self-rule area of Jericho. Denmark, Sweden and Holland agreed to contribute \$6 million in aid, while Germany decided to give \$2 million in equipment for the academy. General Abdul Razak Al Juaideh told journalists in Gaza City. Building will start on the new academy in Jericho in April to train new recruits, as well as a branch in Gaza for further training of officers, he said. Gen. Juaideh met in Gaza City with representatives from the donor countries to present them with proposed security projects, including the creation of a forensic lab and a prisoners training centre.

King warns against Israeli moves in Arab Jerusalem

HM, in talks with Irish leaders and in joint statement with King Hassan of Morocco, stresses international legitimacy should be basis for the Holy City's status

DUBLIN (Agencies) — His Majesty King Hussein on Wednesday held talks with Irish leaders on the Middle East peace process and bilateral relations and emphasised that no action be undertaken to change the status of Arab East Jerusalem, which will be determined in the final status negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. The King, who arrived from Morocco after talks with King Hassan II, first met with Irish President Mary Robinson at her official residence before talks with Prime Minister John Bruton in a meeting attended by the Jordanian premier, Abdul Karim Kabariti. The Middle East peace process with particular focus on Arab East Jerusalem were the main issues the King discussed with the Moroccan monarch in Rabat and with Irish leaders to Dublin.

In the joint statement, King Hussein and King Hassan called for efforts to protect the city's Arab identity and for increased support and intensive efforts to give momentum to the peace process. The statement said the two leaders exchanged views over pan-Arab affairs and pledged to maintain coordination in matters related to Arab and Islamic issues of common concern to Jordan and Morocco. They also agreed to form a Jordanian-Moroccan committee to be co-chaired by the prime ministers of the two countries to promote coordination in all fields. In his talks in Dublin with Prime Minister Bruton, King Hussein also stressed the need to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people and improve their living conditions, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, said. "King Hussein reiterated that the status of Arab East Jerusalem should not be tampered with until its final status is determined at the final status negotiations," Petra said. The agency quoted the King as warning that "if anything takes place otherwise it will affect and endanger achievements made so far in the peace process."

King Hussein specifically described Israel's continued building of Jewish settlements in the occupied territories, including Arab East Jerusalem, as endangering the peace process. The peace that is being sought is based on respect for human rights, international legitimacy, coexistence, security and the socio-economic development of the people of the Middle East, the King said. King Hussein voiced optimism that the peace process will progress in spite of all challenges and difficulties. The King stressed the need for the resumption of talks on the Israeli-Syrian track. King Hussein underlined Jordan's support for the European Union's (EU) efforts to reinvigorate the peace process through its special envoy to the Middle East, Miguel Moratinos. Mr. Bruton commended the King's efforts and Jordan's role in reaching a just, durable and comprehensive peace in the region. He also paid tribute to the Jordanian Armed Forces' role in peacekeeping operations in several conflict areas around the globe. The King and Mr. Bruton also reviewed issues of common interest to both Jordan and Ireland, Petra said. King Hussein, Her Majesty Queen Noor and Her Royal Highness Princess Haya earlier met with President Robinson at the presidential palace. King Hussein conferred upon President Robinson the Al Hussein Ben Ali Medal and upon Mr. Bruton the Al Nahda Medal. The King and the accompanying delegation were received by the Irish prime minister and minister of foreign affairs as well as senior officials and the Jordanian ambassador to Ireland. Accompanying the King were Prime Minister Kabariti, Minister of Planning Rima Khialaf and Minister of Information Marwan Musaher. After talks with Mr. Bruton and Foreign Minister Dick Spring, King Hussein was to attend a formal dinner at the foreign ministry headquarters.

Israel will build colonies in Arab Jerusalem, Netanyahu tells Peres

Work already under way on a new settlement in West Bank

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told the Labour opposition on Wednesday he was determined to go ahead with construction of a controversial Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem. Mr. Netanyahu's own right-wing demands an immediate start to building in Har Homa on the southern edge of Arab East Jerusalem, but at a meeting with Labour leader Shimon Peres and other Labour deputies, the premier did not commit to a date. "It is (Netanyahu's) intention to build throughout the city of Jerusalem, including the neighbourhood at Har Homa," a statement from the prime minister's office said. A decision on a start date for the project will be made when cabinet ministers meet on Jerusalem affairs, it said. Mr. Netanyahu on Tuesday decided to delay a decision for a week. Labour Deputy Ehud Barak, the top candidate to succeed Mr. Peres as party leader, called on Mr. Netanyahu to give the green light for Har Homa and accused him of bending to "foreign pressure" by delaying. Mr. Netanyahu also raised the possibility of building homes for Arabs in the planned 6,500-home Jewish neighbourhood at Har Homa, and said the cabinet had agreed to provide funds for Arab homes, without specifying a sum. Right-wingers in Mr. Netanyahu's ruling Likud-led coalition threatened a rebellion after reports that the prime minister had promised not to build at Har Homa during a meeting with U.S. President Bill Clinton last week. Palestinians have warned of violence if Israel builds at Har Homa, a hill of land confiscated from Palestinians south of Jerusalem across the green line separating the West Bank from Israel. Since it "annexed" East Jerusalem in 1967, Israel has financed the construction of some 40,000 homes for Jews in the sector but not a single home for Arabs, according to Israeli human rights groups. The Israeli housing ministry said in May 1995 that it would build for the Palestinian population, which numbers 150,000 in Arab East Jerusalem.

Israel orders demolition of UNRWA school building

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israel has ordered the demolition of a U.N. building meant to serve as a school for Palestinian refugees in the West Bank, saying the structure was built without a permit, Israeli officials said Wednesday. A spokesman for the Israeli military administration in the West Bank accused the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) of illegally granting a building permit to the U.N. Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) for the school in an area still under full Israeli control. "This is a violation of agreements by the Palestinians not to grant building permits in areas outside their jurisdiction," Lieutenant Peter Lerner told AFP. The Palestinians informed UNRWA that they could build in the Bet Surik area between Jerusalem and the self-rule town of Ramallah in the expectation that the area would eventually be transferred to Palestinian control, Lt. Lerner said. However, Ahmad Abed Rahman, secretary general of the cabinet of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, said Israel has control only of security in the area, not civilian affairs. "This is a great Israeli violation against an international body," Mr. Abed said. "This shows Israel is not serious about the peace process," he added. In a meeting Tuesday between civil administration and UNRWA officials, Israel issued the order informing the representatives they must destroy the building or Israel would. A spokesman for UNRWA said they were looking into the matter and had not yet decided what action to take.

FBI head arrives today

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The possible extradition of a leader of the militant Palestinian movement Hamas to Jordan as a compromise to resolve a potential crisis is expected to be discussed here during the visit here Thursday and Friday of the director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

The U.S. embassy here confirmed that FBI Director Louis J. Freeh was due here on Thursday for a two-day visit for meetings with Jordanian "law enforcement officials" in response to an invitation. But it declined comment on specifics. "Mr. Freeh is coming to Jordan in response to an outstanding invitation extended by the law enforcement officials of Jordan," an embassy spokesman said. "Since he was in the region to connections with opening legal attaché offices (at the U.S. embassies) in Tel Aviv and Cairo, he has taken the opportunity to visit Jordan," added the spokesman.

Jordanian sources said they expected Mr. Freeh and senior officials here to discuss the fate of Musa



His Majesty King Hussein on Wednesday confers upon Irish President Mary Robinson the Al Hussein Ben Ali Medal (Reuters photo)

Deng Xiaoping, brains behind modern China, passes away

BEIJING (AP) — Deng Xiaoping, China's paramount leader, died Wednesday from an advanced stage of Parkinson's disease with complications of lung infections, the Chinese government said. He was 92. Deng, a veteran communist revolutionary who guided China from political chaos and economic ruin towards prosperity, leaves his political heirs in place. No one is immediately expected to supplant Communist Party General Secretary Jiang Zemin and the other younger, technocratic leaders backed by Deng. But his death was expected to sharpen political manoeuvring among top party leaders that has been going on behind the scenes for years. Neither Mr. Jiang, Premier Li Peng nor the others have Deng's stature with the all-important military and remaining party elders. His successors will have to continue to rule by building consensus among the powerful constituencies. Deng died at 9:08 p.m. (1308 GMT) Wednesday of failed respiratory and circulatory functions after receiving emergency treatment, the state-run Xinhua news agency said. An announcement was issued to all Communist Party, government and military organs. Xinhua reported. The announcement referred to "our beloved comrade Deng Xiaoping." It gave his age as 93, although his birthday was previously given as Aug. 22, 1904. A letter to party members said China's central committee proclaimed "with profound grief to the whole party, the whole army and the people of all ethnic groups throughout the country that our beloved comrade Deng... passed away."

There were no signs of troop movements in Beijing early Thursday, but four armed guards with AK-47 stood outside the alley to Deng's home, near the palace China's emperors used for 500 years. Flags were ordered flown at half-mast at major landmarks in China and at its embassies overseas. Xinhua also reported that foreign governments will not be invited to send delegations to the funeral, in keeping with China's practices. U.S. President Bill Clinton called Deng "an extraordinary figure on the world stage" for the past two decades and credited him with being "the driving force" behind China's decision to normalise relations with the United States. Hong Kong Governor Chris Patten said Deng's concept of "one country, two systems" helped "to lay the foundation for Hong Kong's stability and prosperity after 1997." The British colony reverts to Chinese rule on July 1. Confirmation of Deng's death came after days of rumours that his health had worsened had spread through the capital. Deng, who weathered three political purges during his seven decades as a Communist Party member, rose to the pinnacle of power in 1978, two years after the death of his revolutionary mentor Mao Tse-Tung.

Zarqa mayor held on charge of slandering Parliament

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Zarqa Mayor Mustafa Fayad was detained on Wednesday on charges of slandering Parliament, judicial sources said. Dr. Fayad was ordered detained by Zarqa Prosecutor Azzam Obeidat for two weeks pending trial for allegedly telling an Islamist weekly that "three fourths of the deputies are liars."

and you only published what the deputy said without referring to us, and of course, Deputy Emoush is mistaken," the mayor said in the interview. He also accused the Islamists in Zarqa of lying to people in the 1989 municipal elections. "The Islamists deceived people by trying to pass to them the slogan 'Islam is the only solution', and that is how they won the elections," Dr. Fayad said. Speaker of the Lower House Sa'ed Hayel Srour said during Wednesday's Parliament session that he was shocked by what he read in Al Saheel.

A request to release the mayor on bail was rejected Wednesday. Dr. Fayad's remarks, which appeared in the latest issue of the weekly Al Saheel, came in response to Islamist Deputy Bassam Emoush (Zarqa), who, during a Parliament session in January, accused the Zarqa Municipality was extorting money from citizens. Zarqa municipal employees were also accused of demanding money from shopowners who wish to display merchandise on the pavements outside their shops. In response to these allegations, Dr. Fayad told the Jordan Times in January: "If people really believe extortion is being practised by the municipality, then they can take their complaints to court."

Al Saheel interviewed Dr. Fayad and his predecessor Yasser Ouhari and ran both interviews opposite to each other. The interviews focused on the municipality's performances under the administrations of Dr. Fayad and Mr. Omari. Al Saheel quoted Mr. Fayad as saying: "I do not like the whole Parliament and this is my opinion."

Dr. Fayad was also quoted as saying that Deputy Emoush attacked the municipality in a Parliament session saying that "I (Fayad) bribed a reporter by giving him a kiosk in return for news coverage, and you (Al Saheel) published it in your newspaper."

Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment Abdul Razzaq Tabet said during the Parliament session that he contacted the Deputy Mayor of Zarqa who said that he was informed by Dr. Fayad that he did not say what was published. "If it was proven that Dr. Fayad did indeed say these things, he should be punished, or he should be brought in front of Parliament and made to apologise," Mr. Tabet said. Editorial adviser of Al Saheel Hithni Asmar told the Jordan Times that both interviews were taped.

Al Saheel lawyer Sami Huseini said no lawsuit was filed against the newspaper. "No one contacted me regarding the article that was published in the newspaper," Mr. Huseini told the Jordan Times.

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(Continued on page 7)



ARAFAT IN MOSCOW: Palestinian President Yasser Arafat smiles as he poses for photographers with Russian Orthodox Patriarch Alexy II after their meeting at the patriarch's Moscow residence on Wednesday. Mr. Arafat ended a visit to Moscow on Wednesday and flew to Turkey (Reuters photo)

Okamoto sole survivor among Lod assailants

BEIRUT (AFP) — Kozo Okamoto, the Japanese red army member arrested in Lebanon, was the sole survivor among the three Japanese gunmen who killed 26 people and wounded 80 in a May 1972 attack on Tel Aviv's Lod airport.

Sentenced to life in prison by a military court in July 1972, the former agriculture student from Ashikita in Kumamoto prefecture was released on May 20, 1985 along with 1,150 Palestinians in exchange for Israeli soldiers.

According to intelligence sources, Okamoto, 49, has divided his time since then between the Syrian capital Damascus and the Syrian-controlled Bekaa Valley of Lebanon, where he was arrested this week with four other Red Army members.

The Japanese authorities issued an international arrest warrant against Okamoto following his 1985 release from an Israeli prison and are expected to ask for his extradition.

Described by teachers as a promising student, Okamoto was reportedly persuaded by an elder brother to join the Red Army faction in 1970.

The Japanese Red Army, which is led by a 51-year-old woman, Fusako Shigenobu, and seeks to foment world revolution, was formed in 1971 as the overseas terrorist arm of the Red Army faction.

The group was active alongside Palestinian extremist movements in the 1970s and 1980s, carrying out plane hijackings and attacking diplomatic missions in Asia and Europe.

The Lod massacre was one of the bloodiest attacks carried out by the group. On the evening of May 30, 1972, Okamoto and two other Japanese Red Army members arrived at Lod airport on air France Flight 707 from Paris via Rome.

They produced three Kalashnikov rifles and hand grenades from their luggage and opened fire at random on passengers in the arrivals terminal.

Most of the victims were Christian pilgrims from Puerto Rico although several Israelis also died.

The other two Japanese gunmen, Jiro Sugisaki and Ken Tonio, were killed.

Okamoto reportedly told Israeli interrogators he had trained with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) for three weeks in southern Lebanon before carrying out the attack.

"I didn't kill because I hate the Israelis," Okamoto said. "I killed because I was ordered to."

An Israeli military court rejected Okamoto's request that he be executed and sentenced him to life imprisonment.

Okamoto's father, Yasuo, also asked that his son be put to death and wrote a letter of apology to Israel.

"I bring my greatest, honest apologies for the attack my son did," he said in the letter. "I request with all my heart that my son be executed."

Iraq to send pilgrims to Mecca

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein has decided to allow Iraqis to go on pilgrimage to Mecca this year, Baghdad newspapers said on Wednesday.

"President Saddam Hussein has ordered the preparations of necessary requirements to enable our people to perform the Hajj for 1997," the papers said.

Last time Iraqis were seen in Mecca was in 1994 when about 500 pilgrims travelled by land to Saudi Arabia. Iraq halted the Hajj in 1995, saying U.N. trade sanctions imposed for its 1990 invasion of Kuwait had emptied its coffers of hard cash.

Iraqi religious scholars then ruled that the country's Muslims could defer

their pilgrimage and spend the money on Iraq's poor instead.

In 1994 every pilgrim was allowed to carry \$500. Demand used to surge for the greenback during Hajj seasons, increasing pressure on Iraq's volatile dinar currency.

The papers, quoting Endowment and Religious Affairs Minister Abdul Muneim Ahmad Saleh, said Iraq would take into account its financial condition in preparing for this year's pilgrimage. He did not elaborate.

Iraq's 20 million people are given a quota of 19,000 places a year for the pilgrimage to Mecca under an arrangement of the Organisation of Islamic

Conference limiting the number from any member country to 1,000 per one million Muslims.

But it unlikely so many Iraqis would be able to make the Hajj, one of Islam's five obligations on believers which all Muslims should carry out once in their lifetime if they can.

Iraqis wishing to travel abroad have to pay a fee of 400,000 dinars (\$296), a big sum for most Iraqis. Once other costs are added, then only the rich in Iraq could afford to make the Hajj.

Iraq has unsuccessfully appealed to Muslim states to urge Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates to release frozen Iraqi assets to cover the cost of this year's Hajj.

Earlier appeals to the United Nations to allow Iraqi Muslims to fly to Mecca also fell on deaf ears.

Iraq's southern and northern skies are shut to both civilian and military aircraft by U.S. and allied planes policing two no fly zones over the country.

Flights by international carriers are also not allowed despite Iraqi arguments that this ban was not part of the terms ending the 1991 Gulf war over Kuwait.

Iraqi pilgrims will have to travel by land, going through immigration at the Saudi border post of Ar'ar. The journey takes 24 hours by bus.

Habibi visits Greece

ATHENS (AP) — Iranian first Vice-President Hassan Habibi has begun an official three-day visit to discuss trade expansion, specifically in the oil sector.

It was the first time that an Iranian vice-president has officially visited a European Union member state.

Mr. Habibi's trip to Athens comes just two days after U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright criticised Greece's EU partner Italy for its relations with "rogue states" such as Iran.

Both Greece and Italy import large quantities of oil from Iran. The 15-nation EU, however, has refused to go along with a U.S. law authorising Washington to penalise American and foreign companies that invest more than \$40 million per year in Iranian oil and gas projects.

Greece has in the past described U.S. sanctions against Iran as illegal and said the international community should ignore them.

During his visit, Mr. Habibi was to meet with President Costis Stefanopoulos. Premier Costas Karamanlis and Defence Minister Akis Tsochazopoulos.

According to Iranian officials, Mr. Habibi was expected to discuss ways of broadening cooperation with Greece in the oil sector.

Iranian officials have in the past expressed interest in building a trans-shipment facility.

Iran has also been looking with interest at a 280-kilometre trans Balkan pipeline that would carry up to 600,000 barrels a day from Bulgaria to Greece.

The crude would come from Russia, Kazakhstan and the rich offshore oil fields in the Caspian Sea, which borders on Iran.

U.N. appeals for \$120m for Sudan relief

NEW YORK (UNIS) — As hostilities increase in Sudan, the United Nations today appealed for \$120.8 million to meet the emergency humanitarian needs of the estimated 4.2 million war-affected and displaced persons in Sudan, many of whom are struggling to cope with chronic malnutrition and the alarming increase of infectious diseases. Persistent insecurity combined with natural disasters, including crop failures and floods in the Sudan, have worsened the plight of almost all vulnerable groups who are already living below subsistence levels.

To meet the emergency needs of vulnerable groups including 630,000 children under the age of five, the United Nations is appealing for \$120.8 million to fund 33 projects during 1997. The

largest request is from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) which requires more than \$46 million to help improve the health, nutrition and overall household food security of the war's main victims — women, children and the elderly. The World Food Programme (WFP) is requesting \$43.1 million for food aid, and its transport and handling costs, in order to feed 2.6 million people this year, an increase of 500,000 over last year. This total comprises 2.2 million people in southern Sudan, 374,000 in the transitional zone between northern and southern Sudan and 78,000 in the greater Khartoum area.

At present, some 4.2 million people (3.4 million in the southern states; 445,000 in the transitional zone and

395,000 in greater Khartoum) will require assistance in the form of medical and health care, basic education, emergency shelter, as well as agriculture, livestock and fishing inputs. The most severely affected regions in Sudan are parts of Bahr Al Ghazal, Jonglei and Upper Nile. Some of the country's malnutrition rates are being registered by aid workers in northern Bahr Al Ghazal. Other vulnerable areas include the camps and settlements areas around Khartoum, where an estimated 1.8 million internally displaced Sudanese struggle to eke out a living. Sudan is estimated to have the highest number of internally displaced persons in the world, with as many as 4 million people, of which 80 per cent are women and children.

Celebrated Filipino designer found murdered in Khobar

KHOBAR (Agencies) — A Filipino designer was found stabbed to death in his apartment in this eastern Saudi city, officials at the Philippines embassy said Wednesday.

The body of Amorano Macasor, 43, was discovered by colleagues who were searching for him after he failed to show up for work Saturday, they said. He was found Sunday, lying in a pool of blood near his bedroom door.

The officials said his throat had been slit and that there were stab wounds on his stomach and back.

The murder was disclosed in Saudi newspaper reports. Police officials refused to comment on the reports.

The embassy officials said nine Filipino colleagues of Macasor had been detained for questioning. They spoke on condition of anonymity.

The slain designer's father, a former mayor of the Lanao del Sur province on the southern island of Mindanao, and his brother planned to come to Saudi Arabia this week to make burial arrangements, the officials said.

Macasor designed clothes for an exclusive men's shop in Al Khobar, which he also managed. The store has been closed by police pending completion of their investigation.

Macasor's wife, Samira, is a 20-year-old student at a university in Mindanao. They were married three years ago.

Macasor was considered one of the Philippines' top fashion designers and had won a number of international awards, the English-language Saudi Gazette reported.

He first arrived to Saudi Arabia in 1980 and found work as a bellboy at a local hotel, a colleague said.

"He was killed brutally, stabbed several times in his abdomen, neck and parts of his back," the official told Reuters.

"Police are still investigating and we don't know who could be suspected."

Iraqi suspect arrested in Lebanon

BEIRUT (R) — Lebanese security forces have detained an Iraqi citizen suspected of involvement in the killing of several Iraqi opposition figures outside Lebanon, judicial sources in Beirut said on Wednesday.

They said Bassam Yaqoub Yousef, 28, was arrested in a convent in Lebanon on Monday. He is being questioned over allegedly carrying out on behalf of the Iraqi intelligence a political assassination in Kuwait, London, Morocco and Albania.

No official charges have been filed against Yousef who had last entered Lebanon on Oct. 15, 1996, the sources added.

Last month, Lebanon ordered the release on bail of three Iraqi diplomats suspected of involvement in the 1994 murder of Iraqi dissident Taleb As-Souheil in Beirut.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Israeli-allied militia abducts shepherd

RACHAYA (AFP) — Israel's allied South Lebanon Army (SLA) militia abducted Wednesday a Lebanese shepherd just outside the occupied border zone of southern Lebanon, the police said. SLA soldiers carried out a one kilometre incursion at the north of Israel's self-declared "security zone," the Lebanese police said. The unit seized Mohammad Nayef Melhem, who was guarding his herd near the village of Qelia, they said.

Quake hits near Iran-Turkmen border

MOSCOW (AP) — A moderate earthquake struck the mountainous border region between Turkmenistan and Iran, but no damage or injuries were reported, a news agency said Wednesday. The tremor, measuring about 4.5 on the Richter scale, hit at 9 p.m. (1800 GMT) Tuesday and was centred about 80 kilometres southwest of Turkmenistan's capital Ashgabat, the Interfax news agency reported.

2,000 troops participate in Egypt drug raids

CAIRO (AP) — More than 2,000 soldiers and police used helicopters, camels and armoured personnel carriers to raid illegal plantations growing poppies and hemp, police said Wednesday. They said 25 bedouins were arrested in the three-day campaign, which ended Tuesday. The raids were carried out in the southern Sinai, where the inaccessible mountainous region has been used for decades for illegal drug crops. Police said they destroyed poppies and hemp on 500 faddans. The poppies are used to make opium, and the hemp produces hashish. The raiding troops included soldiers, border policemen and agents of the anti-drug department, the police said.

Tunisia stops activist from travelling

CAIRO (AP) — A Tunisian activist was barred from attending a human rights conference in Egypt for the second time in two years, an advocacy group said Wednesday. Moncef Marzouki, a doctor and prominent human rights activist, was invited to attend the annual meeting of the Arab Organisation for Human Rights in Cairo last Saturday and Sunday, the group said. Dr. Marzouki is a member of the group's board of trustees. He was prevented from attending last year's meeting as well, it said. "Even though he has not been indicted or tried, the authorities are holding his passport and stopping the publication of his books," the group said. Dr. Marzouki, 50, headed the Tunisian league for human rights and was an independent candidate in presidential elections in 1994. New York-based human rights watch honoured his work in 1995. He has repeatedly complained of government harassment.

Qadhafi gives \$1 million to Egyptian bedouins

SALLOUM (AFP) — Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi on Wednesday gave \$1 million to help the bedouins living in Egypt on the border with Libya, a region hit by drought for the past two years. The cheque was handed by the head of Libya's animal husbandry department, Faizi Al Saddik Biram, to Abdul Meneim Said, governor of Marsa Matruh province which is home to 75,000 bedouins. "This gift is to help cattle farmers make up for losses due to the drought and to preserve the animal wealth in this region, which is one of the richest in the world," Mr. Biram said.

Five drug traffickers hanged in Iran

TEHRAN (AFP) — Five drug traffickers, four of them Afghan nationals, have been hanged in public in north-eastern Iran, newspapers reported Wednesday. The convicted drug traffickers were also charged with killing two policemen in armed confrontations in the Fariman region near the Afghan border, the daily Qods said. They were arrested at an unspecified date with around 1.6 tonnes of drugs smuggled into Iran from Afghanistan. A crowd watching the executions chanted "Death to America, Israel and drug traffickers." More than 2,000 people have been hanged here on drug-related charges since stiff anti-drug laws went into force in 1989. The laws call for the death penalty for anyone caught with more than 30 grammes of heroin or five kilogrammes of opium.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

14:00Cartoon
14:30Curiosity Show
15:00They Came From Outer Space
15:30N.B.A. Basketball
17:00News Flash
17:02Out of This World
17:15French Programmes
19:30News Headlines
19:35Parenthood
20:00Cinema: Cinema
20:30Babylon 5 (Science Fiction)
21:10Kung Fu: The Legend
22:00News in English
22:25Feature Film: "Evil - U"
23:59Tamil

PRAYER TIMES

04:52Fajr
06:10(Sunrise) Dhuhr
11:49Dhuhr
14:59Asr
17:29Maghreb
18:46Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweifeh, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
632785.
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation
Tel. 637440.
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757.
Terra Sancta Church Tel.
622366
Anglican Church Tel. 652826.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Armenian Catholic Church

Tel. 771331.

Armenian Orthodox Church

Tel. 775261.

St. Ephraim Church

Tel. 771751.

Armenian International Church

Tel. 827126

Evangelical Lutheran Church

Tel. 824328.

German-speaking Evangelical

Congregation Tel. 845457

The Latter-Day Saints

Tel. 654932.

Church of Nazarene

Tel. 675691.

The Evangelical Local Church

in Amman Tel. 811295

English-speaking

Latin Catholics Parish Tel.

614190.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

Skies will be partly cloudy with a chance of scattered showers and winds southeasterly moderate. In

Aqaba, winds will be southerly moderate and seas rough.

Mini/Max. Temperatures

Amman06/17

Aqaba11/25

Deserts08/18

Jordan Valley16/23

Yesterday's high temperatures:

Amman 17, Aqaba 25 Humidity

readings: Amman 22 per cent.

Aqaba 24 per cent.

USEFUL

TELEPHONE

NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:

Dr. Ramzi Mzawi894788

Dr. Khaled Abidin657129

Dr. Bassam Karadshieh 759200

Dr. Khaled Ma'adi661144

Firas pharmacy661912

Ferdows pharmacy778356

Al Asema pharmacy637055

Al Salam pharmacy636730

Yacoub pharmacy644945

Shmeisani pharmacy637660

Nairoukh pharmacy623672

Najib pharmacy847632

IRBID:

Dr. Ghazi Ta'ammeh 250080

Al Quds pharmacy(-)

ZARQA:

Dr. Samir Al Lawzi989601

Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111

Civil Defence Department 661111

Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630341

Civil Defence Emergency 199

Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777

Fire Brigade647101

Blood Bank775121

Highway Police843402

Traffic Police896390

Public Security Department

630321

Hotel Complaints

605800

Price Complaints

661176

Water and Sewerage

Complaints897467

Amman Municipality

Complaints787111

Telephone Information (direct

tory assistance)121

Overseas Calls

010230

Central Amman Telephone

Reparis623101

Abdali Telephone Repairs

661101

Jordan Television

773111

Radio Jordan

774111

Water Authority

680100

Jordan Electricity Authority

815615

Electric Power Company

636381

RJ Flight Information

08-53200

Queen Alia Intl. Airport

08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:

Hussein Medical Centre

813813/32

Khalidi Maternity642816

Akileh Maternity643441/2

Jabal Amman Maternity

642362

Malbas, J. Amman636140

Palestine, Shmeisani 607071

Conference participants debate reasons for peace fears

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The slow but sure progression of the peace process has increasingly diminished the fear of war and violence in its wake, a "fear of peace." But, what exactly are we afraid of?

The question is the subject of a two-day workshop hosted by the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies which brings together seven academic and intellectual from the Arab World and Israel.

The answers, it seems, may be much more subtle and personal than security, territorial or natural resources considerations. HRH Crown Prince Hassan, during the workshop's opening remarks, said that "the peace treaty forces us to meet new realities head on which had been obscured for some time."

"So many years after peace, one by-product of the peace treaty is that a new regional interdependence is in the offing," he said. "This has been made possible by the realization that none of us can go it alone."

Israeli Ambassador to Jordan Shimon Shamir defined the "fear of peace" as "denoting the feeling that peace creates realities that threaten one or more collective basic needs: these may include dignity, self-image, core values, cultural norms, interpretative systems, sense of security and sense of control."

These, he said, are "mind-set factors," which, he often real in their consequences. "Compromise means concession," he added. "Arabs or Israelis may fear that compromises they made weren't necessary or that they reflect failures."

Peace has also been perceived as a challenge to identity, cultural heritage and self-image, the ambassador asserted, which is often accompanied by a perceived threat to religious Islamism.

"[There is a worry] among some Jews that peace will bring with it assimilation into the non-Jewish world, an 'alien' influence over the younger generation and mixed marriages," he explained.

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Three declare candidacy for presidency of the JBA

By Lola Keilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Three lawyers representing major distinct political forces in the Jordan Bar Association (JBA) have decided to run for presidency elections, scheduled to take place in March.

The three men are incumbent JBA President, Arab nationalist and former deputy Hussein Mjalli, Islamist Saleh Armouti, and Zuhdi Dassi, who is seen as very close to Al Fateh (a faction of the Palestine Liberation Organisation).

The three men have all served on the JBA executive council.

Analysts believe that the most intense competition is between Mr. Mjalli and Mr. Armouti, the latter of whom lost by a margin of 22 votes in favor of the former in last April's by-elections.

The candidate who secures over 50 per cent of the vote cast in the first round wins the elections. If none of the candidates secures the required vote, then a second round decides between the top candidates.

"Until now, coalitions have not been formed and therefore no one can tell where Fateh will stand if Mr. Dassi withdraws from the race," analysts, who requested anonymity, postulated.

Mr. Mjalli told the Jordan Times that, as nomination registration ends today, he will soon announce the formation of the Popular Unity List (PUL) coalition, which traditionally represents leftist and Arab nationalists.

Analysts say that coordination among Arab nationalists and leftists was strong this year as only one candidate is running on behalf of the PUL. They also believe that Arab nationalists have learned a lesson from the last by-elections when votes were divided among three

Arab nationalists and the coalition almost lost the elections.

During the by-elections, one of the hottest and most political among Jordanian lawyers to decide who would head the 3,000 member organisation. Mr. Armouti won the largest number of votes in the first round, but as he failed to secure the required majority of votes cast, a second round was deemed necessary.

In the second round, the two remaining presidential candidates, Zaid Khawneh and Jawad Yousif, both Arab nationalists, withdrew their candidacy in favour of Mr. Mjalli, who became JBA president for one year.

The by-elections were called for after Kamal Nasser resigned as JBA president as he was appointed minister of administrative development.

Although Islamists were close to winning the April by-elections, no Islamist has ever managed to win the presidency and the association has always been controlled by a coalition representing Arab nationalists, leftists and Baathists.

However, Mr. Armouti believes that he could set a precedent as a young generation of lawyers voted in his favor last year.

These young lawyers, who voted for Mr. Armouti last year, told the Jordan Times that their votes were not based on any political affiliation, but on what they felt each candidate could provide for the association.

As for the ten-seat council elections, so far 33 candidates have nominated themselves.

Deputies ask government to restrict gubernatorial authority

By Maria Bizri
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A total of 23 deputies Wednesday asked the government to draft new legislation which would limit gubernatorial authority to detain any citizen to 24 hours after which time they would be obligated to refer him/her to court.

The deputies maintained that they were prompted to make the proposal by increased "violations of citizens' freedoms" allegedly induced by the Ministry of Interior "under the pretext of crime prevention."

In the proposal, forwarded to Lower House Speaker Saad Hayel Srour, the deputies said that crime prevention had become a pretext for the misuse of power for personal vendettas.

According to the Constitution, a group of 10 or

more deputies or senators can propose new legislation. The proposal is then forwarded to the House legal committee, which studies it and if approved it is sent to the House for its authorisation. The Speaker then forwards the proposal to the government to submit it in the form of a law either in the same session or the one directly following.

The proposal was signed by Ahmad Kofahi, Bassam Emoush, Samih Faraf, Saad Hayel Srour, Khalid Abdul Nabi, Jamal Khreishah, Mohammad Abu Olem, Ahmad Kassabeh, Abdul Majeed Akiash, Nazih Ammarin, Nader Abu Sha'er, Hamzeh Mansour, Hammam Saeed, Ibrahim Zaid Keilani, Theeb Anis, Abdul Aziz Jaber, Suleiman Sa'ad, Bader Riati, Abdul Munem Abu Zant, Mohammad Haji, Mufleh Lawzi.

Salem Zuwaideh and Bassam Hakkadin.

Much of the rest of Wednesday's Parliament session was devoted to debate of the arrest of Zaqqa Mayor Mustafa Fayad, initiated by Zaqqa Prosecutor Azam Obeidat. The mayor was arrested on charges of libel and slander against parliamentarians and has been incarcerated for 15 days pending trial. Bail has been denied (see story page 1).

During Wednesday's session, the Lower House ratified a number of the 292 articles of the draft companies law. The articles dealt mainly with the role of auditors, holding companies, mutual investment companies, tax exemption and registered foreign companies operating in or outside of Jordan.

Centres to be created to process dairy products

AMMAN (J.T.) — The World Food Programme (WFP), in collaboration with the Jordan Cooperative Organisation (JCO), is financing a project worth an estimated \$350,000 to process dairy products, as stipulated in an agreement signed in Amman Wednesday.

The project entails the construction of four centres for collecting, refrigerating and processing goat milk in the Maan and Karak governorates in southern Jordan.

A JCO statement noted that two of these centres, in Maan and Karak, will be processing cheese, jam (a hardened yoghurt) and cooking fat, with each centre producing a tonne of these products per hour.

It said that the other two centres, to be set up in Maan and Deir Allah, will collect and refrigerate milk.

The statement maintained that these centres will create at least 30 new jobs for Jordanian workers.

It also said that the centres will be managed by local cooperative societies which will collect all extra goat milk produced in these areas and thus prevent waste.

The statement said that the WFP will supply the required equipment for these centres in two months.

According to the organisation, JCO Director Khaled Tayeb is in constant touch with the WFP to finance more centres in other areas of the Kingdom through the programme's grants allocated from the beginning of this year until the year 2002.

The agreement was signed by Mr. Tayeb, WFP representative Mustafa

Milad and the manager of a local company, entrusted to implement the project.

The WFP, an arm of the Rome-based UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), had announced last October that it would supply Jordan with \$10 million in equipment and food to boost agricultural production over a five-year period.

The WFP has been providing assistance to the Kingdom since 1964 and in October it pledged to supply this round of equipment and food and to help Jordan develop and reclaim highlands, reduce soil erosion, plant fruit trees, create pasture and range lands and contribute to programmes emphasising rural women's incomes.

Journalists plead not guilty to charges of lese majeste

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Two journalists currently being tried at the State Security Court on charges of lese majeste, Wednesday pleaded not guilty to the charges against them.

Nahed Hattar, 37, and Abdullah Abu Ruman, 23, are both charged with slandering His Majesty King Hussein and His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan.

Mr. Hattar, who is accused of distributing slanderous articles, testified, in a nine-page defence statement, that the prosecution failed to pinpoint any statement in any of his articles which could be considered slanderous.

"Instead, the prosecution relied on probability and conclusion and there was no real basis to the charge filed against me by the prosecutor," he told the court.

The charges against the two were attributed to articles they wrote during and after the unrest in August, following a government decision to lift bread subsidies.

Some of these articles were published in weekly newspapers, while other articles were seized during a

police raid at Messrs. Hattar and Abu Ruman's office.

Mr. Hattar maintained that all newspapers in Jordan are subjected to the Press and Publications Law and could be ordered closed and those responsible questioned if they violate this law.

"How is it possible," he then asked, "that these newspapers are still being printed although they regularly publish my articles, which the prosecution charges are slanderous?"

Journalist Abu Ruman, who is accused of verbal slander, told the court that his former statement in front of the military prosecutor was not entirely accurate.

"Several things that I said were either missing or not included in my testimony by the prosecution," Mr. Abu Ruman said. "I testified without the presence of a lawyer."

He was reportedly detained for 66 days. "I wrote an unpublished opinion regarding the government decision to lift the bread subsidy and it is for this that I am being tried," Mr. Abu Ruman said.

"The piece I wrote did not include any word or reference which could [be interpreted to] slander the King and I kept it locked in my

office where it was seized by police," he added.

"The two could also face a civil trial on charges of propagating material which harms national unity and relations between Jordan and Palestine, sows sectarianism and ethnicism, instigates violence, terror and hatred, and undermines national unity."

At the end of the court session, Military Prosecutor Ahmad Harran asked the court for time to read the two defence statements and discuss it with the defendants.

The court tribunal agreed and set Feb. 24 as the new date to hear the case.

Following the conclusion of the case, Defence Attorney Faisal Batayneh told reporters that he is planning to subpoena six witnesses for the defence.

They are: former prime minister and Deputy Taher Masri, Deputy Toujan Faisal, former ministers of information Ibrahim Izzidin and Hani Khasawneh, Editor of the weekly tabloid Al Bilad Jihad Momani and Editor of the weekly tabloid Al Hadath Nidal Mansour.

Experts continue discussions on possible Aqaba airport

AMMAN (J.T.) — Technical experts from Jordan and Israel are scheduled to meet in Aqaba today to follow up on discussions regarding the feasibility of the slated construction of a joint Israeli-Jordanian airport in Aqaba, according to Minister of Transport Nasser Lawzi.

Mr. Lawzi told the Jordan Times Wednesday that some obstacles are still to be overcome in order to secure approval for the project.

However, he stated his hopes that participants in the meeting would approve designs and studies for the project, estimated to cost \$100 million.

A U.S.-financed feasibility study, conducted by the Trade and Development Agency, was finalised last July, at a cost of \$500,000, but since then no technical meeting has been convened for more detailed discussions, he said.

One of the problems facing the project was an Israeli demand that the projected airport be confined to international flights, a demand which Jordan has opposed, the minister explained.

Once the agreement has been finalised, he stated, the two sides will invite bids from private sector firms for the airport's construction.

Flights between Amman and Tel Aviv and Amman and Haifa have been running according to joint agreements, Mr. Lawzi said and occupancy on board planes is estimated at 60 to 70 per cent.

Last December, Royal Wings, an affiliate of Royal Jordanian (RJ), initiated semi-weekly flights between Amman and Haifa and previously commenced five weekly flights between Amman and Tel Aviv.

He affirmed that buses travelling between Amman and Irbid and Tel Aviv, Haifa and Nazareth were continuing at the rate of two daily trips, while, he said, hundreds of cars are crossing the borders monthly.

The minister then stated that he will visit Algeria in late March to discuss air transport cooperation and sign a bilateral land and maritime transport agreement.

What's Going On

FILMS

*"Malcolm X" at the American Center, Abdoun on Thursday at 5:00 p.m.
* "La flor de mi secreto" at Instituto Cervantes, Jabal Amman on Thursday at 5:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

* Works by artist Amanda Shehadeh at the French Cultural Centre, until March 6.
* Display of Jordan River Designs Products, Jabal Amman (Tel. 613081/2) until Feb. 28.
* Art exhibition by Nazih Salim at Orient Gallery, Isam Ajlouni St., Shmeisani, until Feb. 28.
* Bani Hamida exhibition/sale of handicrafts (rugs, cushions, runners, and wall-hangings, Jabal Amman (Tel. 658696/7), until Feb. 28.
* Works by contemporary Arab artists entitled "The New Collection" at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh, (Tel. 643251/2), until Feb. 27.

Police arrest man for forged currency traffic

AMMAN (J.T.) — Police Wednesday confirmed the arrest of a 32-year-old Egyptian national who was apparently attempting to sell forged currency in downtown Amman.

According to an official source, the suspect, Abdul Hamid Attieh, was arrested in Raghadan Complex, and police reportedly found a forged \$805,000 in his possession.

The source told the Jordan Times that the Anti-Forgery Department received information that a man was attempting to traffic in forged banknotes and the department duly placed him under surveillance.

"Mr. Attieh was arrested while offering to sell forged \$100 banknotes for the price of \$25 to an undercover agent," the source said.

He maintained that Mr. Attieh was transferred to Military Prosecutor Bassam Qablan for further questioning before being sent to stand trial at the State Security Court.

Meanwhile, four foreigners accused of smuggling heroin to the Kingdom, appeared before the State Security Court Wednesday.

Abdul Ghani Mohammad, 40, Bader Khan Musa, 37, both Turkish nationals and Fadi Anwar Hussein, 33, and

Juneid Juma, 42, both Syrians, appeared in court while two others, Ahmad Neiza, a Turkish citizen, and Ahmad Mustafa, a Syrian, are being tried in absentia.

All six men are accused of exporting heroin for intended commercial transactions.

According to the military prosecution charge sheet, the six defendants agreed in July of 1996 to export heroin from Turkey and sell it in Jordan.

On Aug. 7, the men apparently began scouting for drug dealers to buy heroin and their movements were reported to the Anti-Narcotics Department.

The department sent an undercover agent who told them that he wished to purchase the drug.

A week later, two of the defendants allegedly informed the agent that they owned 10.5 kilos of heroin and wanted JD153,000 for the stash.

The agent set an appointment for the exchange, near Al Maqsurah Hotel on Wasfi Tell Street, the charge sheet said, and the two defendants were apprehended by police after the transaction was completed.

The military tribunal set Feb. 25 as the date to start hearing defence witnesses in the case.

In another drug-related case, State Prosecutor Samih Majali Wednesday maintained that he completed investigations regarding a drug trafficking case which involved four family members.

According to the military prosecutor, half a tonne of drugs was confiscated, with an estimated worth of JD1.5 million.

According to the prosecution charge sheet, the four planned to buy drugs from Lebanon and sell them in Egypt via Jordan, and had bought a trailer to achieve that purpose.

Within the trailer, the men apparently constructed secret places to hide the drugs.

The four travelled to Lebanon in January 1997, reportedly under the Anti-Narcotics Department's surveillance, and returned to Jordan via Syria.

They were apprehended by authorities upon re-entering the Kingdom.

According to the prosecutor, the case will be referred to the State Security Court within the next few weeks. — R.H.

EVENING OF FRENCH SONGS IN AMMAN!

The French Cultural Centre in cooperation with the Association of French Universities Graduates presents a special evening of FRENCH SONGS (Edith Piaf, Aznavour, Yvette Guilbert...) on Tuesday 25 February, at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:30 P.M.
Parisian singer Francoise LE GOLVAN will perform famous classical tunes "La vie en rose", "Padam", "Milord" and many more!
Price of tickets 6JD on sale at the French Cultural Centre (Tel. 637009 or 636445) and at the Royal Cultural Centre (Tel. 661026/7).
"BIENVENUE AU CCR POUR UNE AMBIANCE DE CAFE CONCERT PARISIEN..."

Zairean army indifferent to U.N. 5-point peace plan

KISANGANI, Zaire, (AFP) — Zairean officials said Wednesday that a five-point peace plan adopted by the U.N. Security Council would have no effect on military operations against mainly Tutsi rebels in eastern Zaire.

"Negotiating with the rebels is out of the question, of course," one official stated in Kisangani, a major town which has become a military base for a counter-offensive against Laurent-Désiré Kabila's rebel alliance.

The U.N. Security Council also failed clearly to name the aggressors and simply called for the withdrawal of foreign troops, the official added. "That is not enough."

The Kinshasa government accuses neighbouring Uganda and Rwanda and, to a lesser extent, Burundi of backing the rebels, who have seized key towns and a large part of the east of the country since October.

A military source here said that further air raids against rebel targets were planned after an attack Monday against Bukavu in South Kivu province, which killed 11 civilians and wounded almost 40 others, according to a toll from aid workers.

A major objective for bombing missions would be the town of Bunia, 600 kilometres east of Kisangani, close to the Ugandan border, the source added.

The government in Kinshasa has declared that other raids, apart from the attack on Bukavu, took place Monday and Tuesday, but there has been no independent confirmation of this claim.

On Wednesday, the three Aermachi fighter-bombers based at the international airport here carried out several sorties, some at very low altitude, witnesses said.

A convoy of five large lorries left Kisangani Tuesday afternoon, full of Zairean soldiers and weaponry heading towards Lubutu to the southeast. Two European mercenaries were seen aboard each of the lorries.

The government has said it will launch a crushing counter-offensive against the rebels, with the help of hundreds of foreign mercenaries, who notably include Serbs.

One group of mercenaries operating out of Kisangani Tuesday went to Gbadolite, the northern Zairean town where President Mobutu Sese Seko resides, an informed source said.

The U.N. peace plan was adopted by the Security Council Tuesday on an urgent request from U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan. It was drawn up by the special envoy to the Great Lakes region, Mohammed Sahnoun.

Zairean Deputy Prime Minister Gerard Kamanda Wa Kamanda criticised the plan, saying it failed to condemn alleged aggression by Rwanda and Uganda or provide for a withdrawal of their troops.

Western diplomats said earlier that the Zairean government had signed on to the five-point peace plan, which calls for an immediate end to fighting and the withdrawal of "all

foreign forces, including mercenaries."

"If there is no evacuation of foreign troops, that means they have not ceased their hostilities," Mr. Kamanda said, adding: "It is a game of cat and mouse that favours our aggressors and which must end."

He said that Kinshasa wanted the Security Council to meet urgently and examine in depth a complaint it had filed against the two countries.

The plan provides for:

— "An immediate cessation of hostilities,"

— "withdrawal of all foreign forces, including mercenaries,"

— "reaffirmation of respect for the national sovereignty and the territorial integrity of Zaire, and other states of the Great Lakes region,"

— "protection and security for all refugees and displaced persons, and facilitation of access to humanitarian organisations (some 400,000 Hutu refugees from Rwanda's ethnic civil war of 1994 are still estimated to be in eastern Zaire),"

— "rapid and peaceful settlement of the crisis through dialogue, the electoral process and the convening of an international conference on peace, security and development in the Great Lakes region."

On Wednesday, Mr. Kamanda went into talks with five African foreign ministers who arrived in Kinshasa on a mission to help mediate a settlement to the crisis.

Meanwhile, South African President Nelson Mandela began meetings in Cape Town Wednesday with leaders of Botswana, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Uganda on how to defuse the increasing conflicts in southern and central Africa.

The mini-summit, scheduled for at least two meetings, is a follow up to Mr. Mandela's lightning tour of the region last week to muster support for political intervention in regional conflicts.

A government official, who asked not to be identified, said Mr. Mandela would seek to bolster a regional peace drive in the Great Lakes region around Zaire, Rwanda and Burundi, as well as a parallel peace mission in nearby Lesotho and Swaziland.

"There are several initiatives underway in Africa at the moment, but they are all heading in one direction and they are in line with the president's concern for an African response to African problems," the official said.

Presidential spokeswoman Priscilla Naidoo said President Quthobesi of Botswana and President Joachim Chissano of Mozambique arrived first at Mr. Mandela's Tuynhuys office alongside parliament.

She said President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe sent a message that his flight was delayed and President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda was expected to arrive later.



U.S. ambassador to the United Nations Bill Richardson (left) meets with United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan during Mr. Richardson's first day of work at U.N. Headquarters in New York City. Mr. Richardson takes over the job from Secretary of State Madeleine Albright (Reuters photo)

New U.S. envoy to U.N. takes up post

UNITED NATIONS (R) — The new United States U.N. ambassador, Bill Richardson, presented his credentials Tuesday to Secretary-General Kofi Annan and affirmed Washington's commitment to the ideals of the United Nations.

"On behalf of President Bill Clinton, on behalf of Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, it is an honour for me to present my credentials to you," he told Mr. Annan, who took over as secretary-general on Jan. 1.

"Let me state that the United States reaffirms its very strong commitment to the charter of the United Nations, to the goals of the United Nations — international peace and security, human rights, economic and social development," Mr. Richardson said.

Commending Mr. Annan "for the excellent start that you have made here at the United Nations," the 49-year-old former Democratic Congressman from New

Mexico also stressed the importance the United States attached to the world organisation.

Shortly afterwards, Mr. Richardson, a former Congressman from New Mexico, met China's U.N. delegation, the first of many he will visit. True to form, he evidently told a joke which caused Ambassador Qin Huasun to break out in loud laughter.

Applying a politician's touch he toured the U.N. cafeteria, shaking hands and introducing himself to startled but pleased U.N. employees, unused to such a gesture from American envoys or those from any other country. "We care about all U.N. employees, not just the ambassadors and the high-level people," he said.

"I went into the cafeteria to shake hands with all employees to symbolise that there is a new era between the United States and United Nations," Mr. Richardson, who

gained a reputation as a diplomatic trouble-shooter while still a congressman, succeeds Madeleine Albright, now the secretary of state.

Mr. Annan, who visited the White House and the U.S. Congress last month, asked Mr. Richardson to convey his best wishes to President Clinton.

"The United Nations needs U.S. leadership, but the U.S. also needs the United Nations," he said, sounding an oft-repeated theme.

"We look forward to working with you and the (U.S.) administration and ensuring that the U.S. is firmly back in the fold, with the question of arrears behind us as we move ahead in strengthening and reshaping this organisation. Welcome aboard."

Mr. Annan was alluding to the twin issues of U.N. reform, which Washington has long demanded, and U.S. payment of long-standing U.N. arrears.

Crew sets Hubble free from shuttle

JOHNSON SPACE CENTRE, Texas (R) — The crew of the space shuttle Discovery released the Hubble space telescope Wednesday after a \$350 million refurbishment that left it with better eyes to probe the universe.

The four-story silver telescope, with golden wings of solar cells, flew free of Discovery's robot arm at 1:41 a.m. est (0641 GMT) as the two craft soared 625 kilometres up approaching the West Coast of Africa.

Hubble "is free to study the stars," radioed shuttle Commander Ken Bowersox.

Astronaut Steve Hawley had used the 50-foot (15 metre)-long mechanical limb to raise Hubble from its dry dock in the shuttle's cargo bay, where astronauts had spent about 33 hours outside upgrading its ageing instruments and components.

The 45-year-old former astronomer and astrophysicist, who used the arm in 1990 to place the telescope in orbit for the first time, returned to the Astronaut Corps for this mission.

Discovery left the telescope orbiting 15 kilometres higher. Four boosts with the shuttle's precision manoeuvring jets had nudged the telescope's altitude to 625 kilometres.

During the shuttle's service call, two teams of spacewalking astronauts made five spacewalks to fit the \$2 billion orbiting observatory with an improved light-splitting spectrograph to seek out black holes and an infrared camera capable of peering through veils of dust.

They also dabbled in electronic brain surgery, installing a new control box for the telescope's solar arrays and a relay system for its computers.

The telescope's peeled, sunburned skin called for some unexpected repairs. A fifth spacewalk was added to the mission to patch up the tears in the observatory's reflective foil skin, which protects it from the extreme temperatures in orbit.

"From my viewpoint, we did more than we set out to do," John Campbell, a Hubble manager at the Goddard Space Flight Centre said. "I'd say we're 110 per cent successful."

A shuttle crew will return to the telescope in December 1999 to install another new instrument, replace its electricity-generating solar panels and better patch up its tattered thermal insulation.

Astronomers hope regular service calls will keep Hubble operating until 2005. Discovery was due to make a rare nighttime landing Friday at Florida's Kennedy Space Centre.

Italy's ex-Communists mull reforms at party congress

ROME (R) — At a party congress six years ago, Italy's Democratic Party of the Left (PDS) ditched communism to woo moderate voters and get into government.

The strategy paid off and the PDS, now the biggest party in Italy's nine-month-old centre-left coalition, gathers again this week to work out where to go from here.

Massimo D'Alema, the PDS leader who is certain to be re-elected since he is standing unopposed, wants to transform his party still further into a broad social democratic force to consolidate its power in Italian politics.

Unlike in 1991, the four-day congress which opens Thursday is not yet ready to come up with a new name and logo. But reform of the party and of Italy is high on its agenda.

"I think the impulse towards reforms will certainly be part of our congress," Cesare Salvi, PDS leader in the Senate (upper house),

told reporters this week.

Deputy Prime Minister Walter Veltroni kicks off the congress Thursday in the heart of a southern Rome suburb conceived by fascist dictator Benito Mussolini, and the opening session will be given over to debate of the left and its role in government.

The PDS, heir to the once-mighty Italian Communist Party (PCI), won just over 21 per cent of the vote in last April's general election, propelling the left into power after decades in which "Reds" were deemed too risky to join the establishment.

The PDS's power is pivotal to Prime Minister Romano Prodi's government — when Mr. D'Alema paid a visit on German Chancellor Helmut Kohl the day before an Italo-German summit recently, many were convinced it proved that he, not Mr. Prodi, wears the trousers.

But the party, despite its transformation from hammer-and-sickle-sporting Marxists to market econo-

mists, still has to triumph among the centre-ground of Italian voters.

Mr. D'Alema's strategy is to portray the PDS as the trustworthy, "serious" option in Italian politics.

The aloof-looking 47-year-old, who has led the PDS since 1994, chairs an important reform parliamentary commission working on changes to update Italy's constitution to try to end half a century of dire political instability.

One of the hottest debates at the congress will centre on how to shake up the welfare state and pension system.

The expected 1,130 delegates will debate a plan to reform social spending, one of the thorniest political topics now.

The 27-page PDS document concludes that "the left has an opportunity to undo... the idea that this is... an unreformable country" but stops short of calling for a controversial early review of a key 1995 pensions reform deal.

Croatia rejects tribunal request for evidence

ZAGREB (R) — Croatia has rejected a request by the U.N. war crimes tribunal (ICTY) to hand over evidence relating to the case of a Bosnian Croat general the court has in its custody, state media reported.

The ICTY told Croatian Defence Minister Gojko Susak last Friday that if Croatia failed to turn over certain documentary evidence in the case of General Tihomir Blaskic by Feb. 19, he would be called before the court to explain.

"The government of Croatia considers the order issued by the tribunal to the Republic of Croatia and its state official to be inappropriate," the government said in a statement carried by the Croat news agency (HINA).

It said the request was not based on the tribunal's statute and the rules of procedure and evidence nor on relevant provisions of international law.

Mr. Blaskic, former commander of the Bosnian Croat militia force (HVO), was indicted in connection with atrocities against Muslim civilians in central Bosnia in 1993 during a year-long Muslim-Croat war.

He handed himself over voluntarily to the tribunal last April and is due to be tried in the next few months.

Last month, the ICTY subpoenaed Croatia and Bosnia to produce more evidence, in the Blaskic case or explain any failure to do so before a judge at the Hague on Feb. 14.

Croatia refused to do so, saying the court had no authority to direct subpoenas to sovereign states or to individuals.

The court asked Croatia for 13 groups of evidence including Mr. Blaskic's notes sent to the Croatian Defence Ministry, orders he received from Mate Boban, former head of the Bosnian Croat separatist entity Herceg-Bosnia, and the ministry's records on arms supplies to Bosnian Croat forces.

"Like any other sovereign state the Republic of Croatia reserves the right to observe the interests of its national security when assisting the tribunal," the Croatian government said in a letter to the court last Thursday.

"This is an outrage. The court is trying to save face because it doesn't hold enough evidence for Blaskic and is nervous about it," a senior Croatian government official who asked not to be named told Reuters.

Croatia's two leading independent weeklies published Tuesday also expressed outrage at the tribunal's demand.

The Croatian weekly Globus published a poll which said 43.4 per cent of those interviewed thought Croatia should not comply with the order and turn over the requested documents possessed by its Defence Ministry.

The court has indicted more than 70 Serbs, Muslims and Croats for crimes committed in ethnic fighting following the 1991 breakup of Yugoslavia. It has seven suspects in custody.

Croatia passed a special law on cooperation with the Hague tribunal last spring but it has not yet extradited any Croat indictees. It said they were not on Croatian territory despite reports some of them were spotted in the country.

Albanian president woos support of angry investors

TIRANA (R) — Albanian President Sali Berisha has launched a charm offensive to win back popular support from angry investors who lost heavily in fraudulent Pyramid schemes.

Europe's poorest country has been swept by protests and riots for the past month after tens of thousands of investors lost large sums of money in the failed get-rich-quick schemes.

The ruling free-market democrats have been blamed by many investors for failing to regulate the schemes and for failing to warn investors, who are new to capitalism, of the risks.

After lying low for weeks, Mr. Berisha launched his campaign to win back support, admitting that he made mistakes but calling on investors to take their share of the blame for gambling on the dubious schemes.

"I came to you to admit errors and mistakes by the ruling government, the party and by me," he said in the southern town of Lushnje Tuesday. "But I am open and I can tell you the people are also to blame."

He started addressing the meetings of carefully selec-

ted supporters in the capital of Tirana Saturday and then moved to Lushnje, which was rocked by riots last month.

Mr. Berisha, elected by parliament to a five-year term in 1992, told reporters he would visit the other southern trouble spots — Fier and Vlore — soon for similar meetings.

He has steadfastly said that the government would not pay compensation for some \$1 billion to \$2 billion lost in five collapsed Pyramid schemes in January.

But in Lushnje he trotted out a string of promises to try to woo support, from declaring the region a free trade zone to speeding privatisation of telecommunications, industry and petrol.

He even promised to help out the local soccer team, drawing huge applause from the audience. The Lushnje Club was sponsored by Pellumb Xhaferri, the detained top manager of one of the collapsed Pyramid schemes.

Most striking, he declared that he was removing all taxes for two years for residents in the area to help them recover after losing large sums of money to the

Pyramid schemes.

"I ordered the finance minister to lift taxes for two years in Lushnje to help farmers and citizens out of this crisis," he said.

Mr. Berisha entered the local theatre to applause and chants of "Sali Berisha" but he was booed by a number of onlookers in the streets when he left 90 minutes later. A rock was hurled at his car as he drove off, one eyewitness said.

Police imposed heavy security for his visit. Plainclothes police swarmed over the town centre. Armed guards were perched on rooftops overlooking the main square and police told drivers they could not park nearby.

Facing a month of nationwide riots and protests, Mr. Berisha appealed for people to remember what Albania was like just five years ago after 45 years under a ruthless Stalinist regime, isolated from almost all other countries, until 1990.

"I understand we are talking about big losses. But do not forget what your lives were like five years ago. Now you are four times better than you were then," he said.

Karen rebels surrender weapons to Burma army

MYAWADI, Burma (R) — Burmese army officers said Wednesday about 400 Karen National Union (KNU) guerrillas surrendered their weapons to Burmese troops but the KNU disputed the number, saying only 70 were involved.

The Burmese officers told reporters the guerrillas banded over 280 rifles and 15 mortars at this border town and dispersed without being detained.

"They did not surrender but merely gave us the arms because they were fed up with fighting," a Burmese officer said.

A KNU spokesman said the guerrillas who surrendered weapons numbered only about 70 and had quit the KNU because they had committed crimes.

"Yes, there are some 70 of the guerrillas who committed adultery and others wrongs who know that they cannot stay with us and have defected to Burma," KNU spokesman Ner Dah told Reuters by telephone.

The latest development follows reports from some senior sources within the KNU of policy differences between hardline KNU leader General Bo Mya and moderate Vice-President Swe Seing over how to deal with the military government in Rangoon.

Mr. Swe Seing wants to soften the KNU's stance against Rangoon and start negotiations for peace with Burma, the sources said.

The KNU was formed in 1948 to fight for greater autonomy from Rangoon and is one of the few rebel factions that continues to fight against the Burmese military government.

Mahn Sha, a confidante of Gen. Bo Mya, said the KNU still commanded more than 15,000 guerrillas and continued to fight against Burmese troops.

"All the soldiers are still under the single command of General Bo Mya, there is no differences in policy or rift in the KNU," Mr. Mahn Sha added.

He cited field reports from KNU guerrillas operating inside Burma that they were locked in fighting with Burmese troops.

Amnesty: Hundreds killed in Rwanda

NAIROBI (R) — Amnesty International said Wednesday it estimated hundreds of people have been killed in Rwanda so far this year.

The London-based Human Rights Group reported an increase in unlawful executions by the Rwanda Patriotic Army (RPA) especially in the context of reprisal operations after attacks.

It also reported killings by armed groups believed to be Hutu former soldiers of the Rwandan Army and Interahamwe militiamen who had a leading role in Rwanda's genocide in 1994.

It said Tutsi civilians were also killing Hutu civilians. "There have been killings in Rwanda on an almost daily basis, especially in the northern and western regions, and several hundred people are estimated to have been killed since the beginning of the year," an Amnesty team said on its return from Rwanda.

It added that most killings were of unarmed civilians

including young children and called on the government to take measures to prevent acts of extreme violence becoming a fact of daily life.

"The government should exercise control over its own security forces and ensure officials involved in human rights violations are suspended from their duties and brought to justice," Amnesty International said.

"Rwandan government cannot be held accountable for the actions of the armed opposition however it has a responsibility to ensure there are no reprisal killings by its own forces," it said.

Amnesty noted the north-western region of Ruhengeri was particularly hit by the upsurge in human rights abuses since the return of more than a million Hutus from Tanzania and Zaire.

It reported for example that at least 20 Tutsi civilians were killed on Jan. 25 at Kinigi by armed men believed to have been for-

mer soldiers of the Rwandan army of militia men.

The next day at least 140 people were killed in what is believed to have been a reprisal attack by Tutsi civilians in the presence of RPA soldiers who apparently did nothing to protect victims.

Amnesty said scores of unarmed civilians were reportedly killed by RPA soldiers during searches following the killings of three Spanish aid workers in Ruhengeri town on Jan. 18.

It said several former members of the Rwandan army who returned from Zaire were killed in some cases in detention.

The Amnesty delegates said fear was tangible with people terrified to speak out and afraid to travel in certain regions.

They said the killing of five U.N. human rights workers in the southwest on Feb. 4 prevented international and local agencies carrying out independent investigations into abuses.



Iran

CHUNG JUNG (R) — Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said Wednesday that it had received information from the U.S. that the U.S. was planning to launch a military attack on Iran. The ministry said it was taking steps to ensure the country's security.

The ministry also said it was in contact with the U.S. to clarify the situation and to prevent any misunderstanding.

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World News



Chinese police man a roadblock near the South Korean consular office compound in Beijing where high-level North Korean defector Hwang Jang-Yop is taken refuge Wednesday. Talks to try to resolve the fate of Mr. Hwang entered an eighth day Wednesday amid signs the North may let him go (Reuters photo)

Iranian minister to visit Pakistan

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati is to visit Pakistan in the next few days in hopes of forging a consensus with the new government in Islamabad over Afghanistan, Iran's Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) said Wednesday.

Mr. Velayati will be the first foreign minister to travel to Pakistan since Nawaz Sharif was sworn in as prime minister Monday, and his visit is to take place either this weekend or early next week, IRNA said, citing the Iranian ambassador in Islamabad, Mehdi Akhundzadeh.

The crisis in Afghanistan and joint efforts to solve it will be high on the agenda of the talks between the two main power brokers in the war-torn country, the ambassador said.

Tehran and Islamabad have been at odds over the political developments in Afghanistan. Pakistan has cordial relations with the Taliban Islamic militia and Iran supports the anti-Taliban alliance formed around former Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani.

The Iranians however appear to be encouraged with the coming to power of Mr. Sharif, who they expect to adopt a more balanced policy in Afghanistan.

"Velayati's visit to Pakistan is a sign of better ties between the two countries after the political changes in that country," said Mr. Akhundzadeh, who held talks with Mr. Sharif before the Feb. 3 general elections in Pakistan.

The diplomatic circles in Islamabad have welcomed Mr. Sharif's positions on domestic and regional issues," he added. "If the new government wants to create economic stability in Pakistan it has to go ahead to remove political and regional tensions."

Iran has held two regional peace conferences on Afghanistan in recent months, but Pakistan has either boycotted them or attended at low levels.

Meanwhile, Afghan opposition faction jets have bombed Kabul, the Taliban-controlled capital of western Badghis province, a senior Taliban spokesman told journalists in Kabul Tuesday.

"There has been a heavy bombardment for three days and it is continuing," Mullah Amir Khan Muttaqi, the Taliban acting minister of information and culture said.

The jets were believed to belong to the ageing fleet of Russian-made aircraft of northern warlord General Abdul Rashid Dostum whose ethnic Uzbek infantry are challenging the Taliban on the ground in Badghis.

Mr. Muttaqi denied there were any casualties from these air raids, whereas a recent report monitored from Iran stated 150 injured and dead had been transferred from Qalai Naw to neighbouring Herat City.

Due to the remoteness and relative inaccessibility of Badghis, information has always been sketchy about that battle-front.

Unconfirmed reports from Kabul from the north of Afghanistan, suggest that Gen. Dostum's forces have made some territorial gains against the Taliban.

The Taliban and Dostum forces control about an equal half of Badghis province, which is characterised by an inhospitable terrain and harsh winter conditions.

Badghis is famous for its pistachio, and nomadic Turkmen tribes who produce exquisitely hand-crafted carpets.

Geo. Dostum is in alliance with the ex-governor forces, which the Taliban forced out of Kabul on Sep. 27.

Ahmad Shah Masood, the top commander of ousted Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani, has recently suffered a major military setback north of Kabul, and was forced to retreat — for the second time — into his native Panjshir Valley.

If Gen. Dostum is successful in capturing Qalai Naw the next logical target would be Herat to the south, a strategic city which not only controls the lucrative cross-border trade with Iran and Turkmenistan, but also road access to Kandahar.

Kandahar in southern Afghanistan is the Taliban's true capital and the unofficial centre of their government.

Peru mudslide kills 33; at least 100 missing

LIMA (R) — At least 33 people were killed and more than 100 were missing when an Andean mountainside collapsed Tuesday in southeastern Peru, sending a wall of mud into two villages, destroying them, authorities said.

"We have recovered 33 bodies at this point. That is confirmed," Luis Barra Pacheco, mayor of the region's capital, Abancay, told Reuters. "Under the mud there are at least 100 people."

Darkness, heavy fog and further small landslides in the area prompted rescuers to call off the search for more victims at about 5 p.m. (2200 GMT).

Civil defence workers, police, firefighters and Peruvian army units were slated to resume search efforts at dawn, the mayor's assistant, Julio Ocampo said.

Officials and firefighters returning from the scene in Apurimac Department, some 480 kilometres southeast of Lima, said they had pulled dozens of bodies from the mud and had seen many mutilated corpses.

"There were arms, heads, pieces of bodies sticking out of the mud," firefighter Richard Rojas told Reuters by telephone after returning to Abancay. "We have tried to dig up the bodies using picks and shovels, but it's been difficult."

Rescuers said the corpses had been battered and mutilated by rocks carried in the torrent of mud.

The mudslide occurred at about 4 a.m. (0900 GMT), virtually burying the villages of Cocha and Pumarana, near Abancay, which were home to nearly 250 people.

"Two villages have totally disappeared," Mr. Barra Pacheco said, adding an estimated 10.5 million cubic metres (300,000 cubic feet) of mud slid off the mountain.

Police said the villages had been evacuated prior to the mudslide after weekend flooding. But their refuge in a fold of the mountain just above the villages put them squarely in the path of the mud as it tumbled down Monday.

Area legislator Dennis Vargas Marin called on President Alberto Fujimori to declare a state of emergency.

"As a congressman, I ask that the city of Abancay and its surrounding districts be declared in a state of emergency," he told local radio. He estimated that up to 300 people may have disappeared and warned of more potential disasters if the seasonal torrential rains continued.

China confirms defection of Pyonyang ideologue voluntary

BEIJING (Agencies) — China confirmed Wednesday that top-ranking North Korean defector Hwang Jang-Yop had sought asylum in the South Korean embassy here of his own free will, despite Pyongyang's charges that he was kidnapped.

The official Xinhua News Agency, citing Foreign Ministry officials, said Mr. Hwang had spent the night of Feb. 11 in the North Korean embassy in Beijing, while travelling back to Pyongyang after a trip to Japan.

"He left there in the morning of the following day and entered into the embassy of the Republic of Korea (South Korea)," Xinhua said.

Analysts here said the Chinese confirmation that Mr. Hwang's defection was voluntary could signal a resolution that would allow for his imminent departure for South Korea.

The Xinhua report was also broadcast on state-run television's evening news, marking the first time the Chinese public at large has been informed of the situation.

"The Chinese side does not want to see any new tension occur on the Korean peninsula because of this incident," the report said.

"It is hoped that the relevant parties will, with a calm and objective attitude, judge the nature of this incident and work to seek a proper solution in it, so as to help preserve the overall interests of peace and stability on the Korean peninsula," it added.

Mr. Hwang, the highest ranking Pyonyang official to defect since the end of the Korean War in 1953 has spent the past week holed up in the consular section of the South Korean mission.

Chinese security forces placed a tight security cordon around the building following threats from Pyongyang that they would retaliate over Mr. Hwang's "kidnapping."

South Korea said Wednesday it had failed to break a deadlock in talks with China over the fate of Mr. Hwang, despite signs that Pyongyang had softened its stance.

Separately, South Korea's ruling party chairman said Seoul must re-think its unification policy towards the North. Lee Hong-Koo of the New Korea Party said food shortages and economic woes were driving the North into a final crisis.

He said the defection by Mr. Hwang was pushing the North Korean leadership deeper into desperation.

A Foreign Ministry spokesman denied a Japanese newspaper report that China and South Korea had agreed that Mr. Hwang could leave Beijing for asylum in South Korea as early as this week.

"Unfortunately, we have not made any real progress in our talks with China and it is too early to talk about when Hwang could leave Beijing," spokesman Lee Kyu-Hyung told Reuters.

Another Foreign Ministry official, who asked not to be identified, said: "He is not likely to leave within a few days. It could be weeks before Hwang can secure his departure."

Japan's Yomiuri Shimbun newspaper reported that Seoul and Beijing had "basically agreed in transfer Hwang" to South Korea.

"The Yomiuri report is not true," the spokesman said. "Our talks with China are still at an initial stage."

Mr. Hwang has taken refuge at the heavily-guarded South Korean consular office in Beijing for eight days.

Foreign Ministry officials said Mr. Hwang's fate could be decided only between Seoul and Beijing, while China maintained it was desirable that Mr. Hwang's case be resolved through dialogue between North and South Korea.

Signs have emerged that North Korea might be ready to give up the fight to recover Mr. Hwang, possibly as a result of mediation by Beijing to end the cold war crisis in its backyard.

The softer tone was first set when Pyonyang's Foreign Ministry said Monday it would dismiss Mr. Hwang if he defected.

Japan's economic daily Nihon Keizai Shimbun reported Wednesday that Kim Jong-Il, head of North Korea's Overseas Economic Cooperation Committee, told a meeting with financial officials in China that Pyonyang had already dismissed Mr. Hwang.

The newspaper quoted sources at the meeting as saying that Kim Jong-Il was asked if North Korea accepted Mr. Hwang's defection.

He replied: "That is what the government has decided. The matter is already closed. He has already been dismissed."

Mr. Lee from Seoul's ruling party said Mr. Hwang must be granted political asylum in South Korea as he wished, but urged the South Korean media and citizens to be cautious and patient.

He said Pyonyang's woes would remain a headache for Seoul.

Apart from Mr. Hwang, many other North Koreans who had fled the North were waiting to defect to South Korea, he said.

"Severe food shortages and economic difficulties are driving the North Korean system to an irreversible final crisis," Mr. Lee told parliament. "In view of North Korea's rapid breaking away from its orbit and its plunge, we must drastically review our unification policy."

Mr. Lee said Seoul's policy of seeking reunification of the Korean peninsula by treating the North as an equal partner might have to be abandoned.

He did not elaborate but a senior New Korea Party official told Reuters the party chairman was stressing the need to brace South Korea for a possible collapse of the North.

Colombian Senate raises stakes in drug war

BOGOTA (R) — Lawmakers have raised the stakes in Colombia's drug war by approving legislation that nearly triples the country's maximum penalty for narcotics trafficking.

The Senate approved the legislation by unanimous voice vote, clearing the way for drug traffickers to be sentenced to a maximum jail term of 60 years from the current maximum of 24 years.

The legislation, eliminating Colombia's lenient anti-drug laws, must now be approved by the lower house of Congress before it is signed into law by President Ernesto Samper.

Congressional sources said the house vote was expected to come as early as Wednesday and that the new sentencing structure would definitely be in place before next week.

U.S. President Bill Clinton will announce in an annual report on Feb. 27 whether Colombia should be "certified" as a trustworthy ally in the anti-drug fight.

Government officials have said in the past that tougher prison sentences, on which Washington has long insisted for Colombian drug kingpins, could help Colombia win back the so-called U.S. "certification" that it was denied last year.

But the country's new and tougher prison sentences come too late for Colombia's most notorious drug lords.

Brothers Gilberto and Miguel Rodríguez Orejuela, the billionaire leaders of the Cali drug mob, were sentenced to ridiculously light sentences in January that could see them walk free in as little as five years.

That decision, handed down by a judge in the southwest city of Cali, which the Rodríguezes once ran as their personal fiefdom, drew a swift rebuke from Washington and fuelled widespread speculation that Colombia will be "de-certified" again in 1997.

Decertification for a second consecutive year could prompt punitive U.S. commercial sanctions that Clinton fell short of imposing in 1996. — Colombia, the world's leading producer of cocaine and a top supplier of heroin to the United States, is under intense U.S. pressure to crack down harder on the drug trade and stem the flow of narcotics onto U.S. streets.

In addition to stiffer prison sentences, the government has announced that it will bow to a key U.S. demand in March by proposing that Congress lift Colombia's 5-year-old constitutional ban on extradition.

Mexico's top anti-drug warrior fired for drug links

MEXICO CITY (R) — The Mexican government has fired its top anti-drug fighter and said it was charging him with drug corruption.

In a major embarrassment for the government of President Ernesto Zedillo, Army Gen. Jesus Gutierrez Rebollo, head of the National Institute for the Combat of Drugs (INCD), was fired for alleged links to Amado Carrillo Fuentes, the country's most powerful drug baron.

"Today we have a well-founded presumption that he and personnel under his direct command have been and are collaborators of the criminal organisation headed by Amado Carrillo Fuentes," Defence Minister Enrique Cervantes told a news conference.

"The Defence Ministry considers well-founded the presumption that in recent years Gen. Gutierrez deceived his superiors, betrayed the confidence placed in him, damaged Mexico's

national security and harmed joint institutional efforts against drug-trafficking," he added.

"It is a very painful thing for those of us who love Mexico."

Gen. Rebollo, 62, was appointed to his job only two months ago. He disappeared from public view last week and officials said Monday that he was in a military hospital after suffering a heart attack on Feb. 7.

Mr. Cervantes said Tuesday his health problems came on precisely when he confronted Gen. Gutierrez in his office with evidence of his suspected corruption 11 days ago.

The arrest warrant against Gen. Jesus Gutierrez Rebollo could be carried out at any moment," Attorney General Jorge Madrazo Cuellar told the news conference.

Mr. Cervantes listed nine points on which the charges against Gen. Gutierrez were based.

The most serious appeared to be that he had moved into a luxury apartment well beyond his means upon starting his new job in Mexico City, and that the apartment was made available to him by a suspected Carrillo lieutenant.

The same man, Eduardo Gonzalez Quiarte, allegedly gave "considerable sums of dollars in cash" and encrypted communications devices to people working directly with Gen. Gutierrez.

The scandal was also likely to embarrass the United States, which had praised Gen. Gutierrez highly for his record of arrests of major drug-traffickers.

Mr. Cervantes said that while Gen. Gutierrez was very effective against some drug gangs, he was protecting Mr. Carrillo's Juárez cartel, described by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration as Mexico's most powerful.

Mr. Zedillo, in a statement, said the charges against Gen. Gutierrez showed that "no one can be above the law... Justice cannot be selective."

The newspaper Siglo 21 reported Tuesday that over the weekend the military launched a surprise raid on three of Gen. Gutierrez's homes in the western city of Guadalajara and arrested four people.

One local reporter who knew the general well said the Gutierrez affair might not be all it seemed.

The reporter, who asked not to be identified, said he understood from local police sources that the operation might have been an attempt by corrupt generals to topple Gen. Gutierrez because of his proven efficiency in hiving drug cartels.

"We think this could be a personal vendetta against the general... by army members who are protecting drug traffickers," he said.

Scientists said last week in Boston that layers of sediment collected from the ocean floor off the coast of Florida suggested that a massive meteorite struck the Earth 65 million years ago and may have led to the extinction of dinosaurs.

Sediment cores collected by an international team of scientists aboard the JOIDES resolution drilling ship indicated that 70 to 80 per cent of the Earth's species were killed in the collision, they said Wednesday.

Military, NASA work to predict asteroid disasters

WASHINGTON (R) — The U.S. military has said it was working with NASA to improve the ability to forecast asteroid strikes on Earth such as one 65 million years ago which might have led to the extinction of dinosaurs.

The Pentagon and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) were working jointly on a project called "NEAT" (Near-Earth Asteroid Tracking Programme), Defence Department spokesman Ken Bacon told reporters in response to questions.

Undersecretary of Defence Paul Kaminski recently ordered a Pentagon study of how asteroid collisions on Earth might be predicted years ahead of time and how they might be dealt with, Mr. Bacon said.

"We did not have the capability to spot asteroids whose orbits were changing far out in space," said Mr. Bacon.

"Now we are developing such a capability. As we develop it, the question arises: Should we prepare ourselves or develop systems that might be able to respond to an asteroid disaster that we could perhaps predict years ahead of time?"

Mr. Bacon said the study was not spurred by disaster movies or television programmes but was a natural evolution of the ability to better track objects in space.

"Just to give you an idea of predictive capabilities, we and NASA predict that in November of 1999 there could be a major meteor storm involving tiny fragments of asteroids and comets that could damage spacecraft or satellites," he told reporters.

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Croatia rejects tribunal request, evidence

ZAGREB (R) — Croatia rejected a request from the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) to provide evidence relating to the case of a Bosnian Serb commander of a military unit, state media said.

The ICTY said it had asked the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to provide evidence relating to the case of a Bosnian Serb commander of a military unit, state media said.

White House and the U.S. Congress last month, and Mr. Richardson has given his best wishes to President Clinton.

The U.S. also needs the U.N. Nations, he said, to support the U.N. Secretary-General's efforts to bring about a settlement of the conflict in the Balkans.

We look forward to seeing the U.S. administration and Congress in the U.S. to support the U.N. Secretary-General's efforts to bring about a settlement of the conflict in the Balkans.

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Sacred unity

ONE SHOULD perhaps look at the debate currently raging among the Islamists of whether to join the government beyond its immediate goal and consider its far-reaching implications on the future of the Islamic movement in Jordan as a whole.

Beyond the rhetoric that employs religious texts to argue for or against joining the government lies a big question: Did the Islamic movement really transform from a dogmatic ideology based on the edict that "Islam is the solution" to a pragmatic political party that believes in democracy, pluralism and the exchange of power through peaceful means?

With the pace of political and economic reform proceeding at slow speed and with the Islamists unable to influence decision-making, pragmatists within the movement say that they face the danger of losing their grassroots support and having their base eroded. They warn that unless they joined the government and gained access to decision-making, disgruntled rank and file Islamists might become fertile ground for extreme ideas, endangering in the process both the regime and the unity of the movement. They have a point.

Their antagonists in the movement, meanwhile, contend that there is very little the Islamists can do to influence the process of government. If any, they would only, though indirectly, endorse the peace treaty with Israel and be dragged into normalisation with the Jewish state. The opponents of joining government see this as also leading to erosion in their grassroots support.

The government stands to gain if the Islamic movement, as represented by the Islamic Action Front, decided to join it. For one, by luring the Islamists in, the government minimises the size of opposition, wins the Islamists' tacit approval of peace with Israel, and, government circles say, adds the force of the Islamists to that of the government in the fight against corruption.

In its quest to bring the Islamists on board, the government is wary that such inclusion could lead to splits within the movement. Such division within the ranks of the Islamists might lead to violence and strife, something that is alien to the decades-old relationship between the regime and the Islamic movement.

Is that a catch-22 situation then?

Not really, say political pundits. The Islamic movement is rational and mature. Its leadership is on control of its rank and file. What Islamic leadership and Islamists in general loathe at the moment is the feeling that they have been marginalised. You need not bring in the Islamists into government to pacify them, say the pundits. Give them Parliament speakership. Reinstate Brotherhood imams into mosques. Put them in charge of the Zakat fund. And last but not least incorporate aspects of their political action programme in the government agenda.

We will know in a matter of weeks whether the Islamists will join the government of Abdul Karim Kaharati. But whether the divide between the so-called hawks and doves within the movement will develop into a rift we will have to wait and see. However, we urge the Islamists, government and regime to avert any action that might result in a rift within the movement. The unity of the Islamic movement in Jordan is very crucial to the unity and stability of the country. We all have a stake in that and we should all contribute to that noble goal.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER for Al Ra'i daily said Wednesday that the Palestinian refugees problem remains the most crucial issue before the Israeli government and the Palestinian leadership, but both sides have regrettably avoided discussing it. Ibrahim Abisi said the Palestinians and the Israelis have set up committees to discuss various issues, even including the question of the Gaza airport, but to date have failed to mention the refugees as if they are in agreement to shelve this vital question. It is the Palestinian refugees who had paid the price of Israel's occupation of their houses and lands since 1948 and it is they who have suffered deprivation, poverty and living in slums and camps, a very difficult life over the past five decades, said the writer. In their talks, the two sides have discussed water, safe passage between Gaza and the West Bank, and the sea and airports, but overlooked the basic question of the Palestinian refugees which constitutes the cornerstone of the Palestinian problem, added the writer. He said when the negotiations started, it was agreed that the refugee problem will be deferred to the final status negotiations, along with the status of Jerusalem, but it seems that the two sides are concerned with various side issues for which they formed the eight committees.

A WRITER for the weekly Al Majd decried government policies with regard to the tourism industry, saying that the government has unduly and without carefully planning allowed five-star hotels and other tourist facilities to mushroom in Amman, Aqaba and the Dead Sea area. Ahmad Nimri said these investments are not expected to yield any profit in view of the decline in the number of tourists to a dangerous level and in light of the prevailing political situation in the Middle East area. Referring to the opening of the southern border post which allowed Israelis free access to Petra, the writer said that this opening has only succeeded in promoting Israeli tourism and helped Israeli tour operators to include Petra in their programmes that are marketed in Europe, but did not help Jordan's economy simply because the one-day tourist trip to Petra via Israel is economically unfeasible for Jordan's tourism industry.

The View from Academia

On money and individual performance

Dr. Ahmad Y. Majdoubeh

WHENEVER WE complain about the performance of many individuals in our part of the world (to both the private and public sectors), the financial factor is cited as a major cause (the major cause, in the opinion of some) for the mediocrity of performance. People who do not earn much, we are told, are not expected to excel in what they do. While there is some truth in this line of logic, there is also a great deal of simplification, distortion and falsehood.

We complain a lot about the performance of people in various spheres and walks of life. We complain that some persons are utterly neglectful and abusive of what they are entrusted with, that some are doing things poorly, that some are doing well but they have the potential to do things better, and so on. There is a justifiable overall sense of dissatisfaction about the way things are done in our society. Those who perform tasks satisfactorily, efficiently and exceptionally well are a small minority in any field or realm.

The other day, we were discussing on public television the obstacles affecting the performance of many of our journalists. It is obvious to all interested (though some refuse to admit it) that many of our journalists do not do their homework well, be it when they cover certain stories or when they write editorials and columns. Much (though by no means all) of what is written in our dailies and weeklies is impressionistic and theoretical. There is a noticeable scarcity of facts, figures and statistics; there is an absence of well-researched feature stories and the concept of investigative reporting is not present in the minds of many. In short, there is a great deal of bad writing.

Why? One major answer was: the journalists are simply not paid well enough.

A few weeks before that we were discussing the performance of teachers, and the same reason was cited. And we cite the same reason when we talk about the performance of our civil servants, accountants, bus drivers, mechanics, poets, athletes, construction workers, bank employees,

waiters, janitors, translators, etc.

Obviously, one cannot deny the importance of the economic factor. The more financially rewarding a job is the more incentive one has to perform well and excel. In my opinion, however, the importance of the economic factor is greatly exaggerated and blown out of proportion at times.

For one thing, are all those who perform well and excel in our society and elsewhere in the world doing so well, economically or financially? Obviously not. In the same governmental sector or department (or newspaper, restaurant, company, bank), you find two people paid the same amount of money one of whom is excelling and the other performing poorly. How do we explain that?

Also, are all those who are not excelling paid poorly? Not necessarily. Besides, should we not, when we judge one's economic status, take into account the overall benefits? Many of our civil servants are paid meagrely. But all of them enjoy good health insurance, good pension and very reasonable working hours. Some have excellent promotion and secondment options.

Compare the situation of a civil servant who earns, at the start of his career, the amount of JD 140 per month to a new employee at a bank or a private company who earns JD 200 or JD 240. The former works from 8 to 2 and enjoys full health benefits; the latter works from 8 to 6 (with a break of one or two hours in between) and enjoys some health benefits or at times none. Why should the latter find his/her job more satisfying than the former?

At this point in history, we are passing through some difficult times and are still in the process of relieving debts, deficits and loans, and thinking of ways to improve investment and generate income. Is it realistic, or even fruitful, to keep talking about the financial and economic status of individuals, with the (false) assumption that such status can be dramatically improved? It cannot.

Moreover, are not there crucial factors affecting individual performance other than the economic or financial?

There are. I would say that many of them are ultimately more significant than the economic.

One important factor is the failure of administrators in various sections, departments and units (governmental as well as private) to affect the work ethics of those under them positively. Many administrators in our part of the world have themselves poor work ethics and exercise a negative influence on those they are responsible for. Many of them foolishly discourage commitment, creativity and excellence among their staff members or employees and create an environment harmful to commitment and achievement. They lack the necessary vision and leadership skills to inspire others to excellence. This is a serious obstacle to excellence of performance.

I place a great deal of emphasis on moral encouragement and appreciation, which is either scarce or utterly lacking in nearly all our institutions.

Another factor is an educational one. Our families, schools and social institutions do not place enough emphasis (in a meaningful way, that is; forget the hollow rhetoric) on work ethics, on public service, on achievement, on distinction. The only emphasis we place when it comes to achievement and distinction is on school grades.

A third factor has to do with our status on the historical scale and with the process of history itself. Our part of the world is full of conceptions, misconceptions, ideas, assumptions, beliefs, attitudes, false notions which run counter to development, progress and distinction. On the scale of 1 to 10, we are somewhere between 4-6 in our stand with respect to both attitude and effort. In many ways, we are still in the stage of childhood or adolescence. We have not entered the stage of adulthood, maturity and professionalism yet.

It is these factors and others that have to be studied, debated and tackled more rigorously and effectively. The financial factor is a red-herring. There are many more fulfilling and satisfying things than money. We should pay more attention to these.

Newer or older democracies — they all 'have their upheavals'

By Gwynne Dyer

STILL ANGRY over her abrupt dismissal from office by President Farooq Leghari last November, Pakistan's former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto did not mince words after her overwhelming defeat in this month's (greatly premature) election. "I was elected for a five-year term, and nobody had any business throwing me out. John Major doesn't get thrown out. Bill Clinton doesn't get thrown out."

But Pakistan's prime minister did get thrown out, two full years before her term was up. And she is not alone. In December, Bulgaria's Prime Minister Zhan Zidenov was driven from office only two years after his Socialist Party won a clear election victory. By early this month, huge demonstrations and a general strike forced the ruling party to abandon its attempt to form a new government and agree to new elections in April.

Then there is "El Loco" (the madman), President Abdala Bucaram of Ecuador. He won a convincing victory at the polls only last August — and yet six months later mass demonstrations in Quito triggered a vote in the Ecuadorian congress that declared him "mentally incapacitated" and dismissed him from office. Congress has now appointed an interim president (his own speaker, Fabian Alarcon), and promises new elections in 18 months.

Asia, Europe, Latin America. Within three months, in three different continents, three countries where democracy is relatively recent have all lost their elected leaders in ways that are highly irregular. Is it, as Bhutto believes, proof that the new democracies are fundamentally more unstable than older ones?

Two themes link all three cases: economic measures that caused widespread pain to ordinary people and corruption. Among the new democracies, at least, governments can inflict economic pain on the electorate, or they can engage in spectacular corruption. But they are seriously at risk if they indulge in both at the same time.

In Pakistan, the corruption was flagrant. Asif Ali Zardari, Benazir Bhutto's husband, was known as "Mister ten per cent" during her first term in office, but this time he was known as "Mister twenty per cent". The economic mismanagement was so blatant that by the end of 1996, inflation was nearing 20 per cent.

President Leghari therefore faced little public resistance when he moved to dismiss Bhutto from office under the notorious Eighth

Amendment to the constitution, which dates back to the days of direct military rule. Technically, it was all done legally, but you could hardly call it a democratic process. There was not even a pretence of legality in the Bulgarian case. A legitimately elected government was driven from office by street demonstrations less than half way through its term. Yet, its fall was clearly in the country's best interest.

The fall of Bulgaria's government was long overdue, since it was basically the old Communist regime in thin disguise. Most other Communist regimes in Eastern Europe fell in 1989, but the Bulgarian "Socialists" persuaded the population to elect them in 1990 (before the collapse of the Soviet Union) by appealing to the deep-seated, pro-Russian sentiments of the average Bulgarian.

The Socialists even managed a comeback in 1994, after a brief and bungled interval of opposition rule in Sofia. But they did nothing to reform the state-run economy, apart from "privatising" lucrative state monopolies into the hands of their own cronies.

Eventually, inevitably, Bulgaria's economy went into a nosedive. The lev, which was trading at 70 to the dollar a year ago, had fallen to 1,900 to the dollar by the beginning of this month. Bulgarian wages have halved in value since New Year's day. So the demonstrations began, openly backed by the opposition Union of Democratic Forces — and thirty days later, the Socialists gave in.

And then there is Ecuador, where Abdala Bucaram's popularity plunged from 65 per cent to only 12 per cent in a mere two months. It was an opposition-dominated congress that seized upon his own chosen nickname of "El Loco" to brand him "mentally incapacitated" (which he obviously is not) in order to remove him from office, but he was certainly the main author of his own misfortunes.

It was not the release of his rock'n'roll CD "Madman in Love" that turned the broad Ecuadorian public against him, nor his accusing an opponent of having "watery sperm," nor even his inviting Ecuadorian-born Lorena Bobbitt, the celebrated American penis-remover, to lunch at the presidential palace. By and large, poorer Ecuadorians liked Bucaram's little eccentricities.

What they liked less was the appointment of his brother as minister of social welfare, and his 18-year-old son as head of the customs service. They did not like the soaring public corruption that prompted the U.S.

ambassador in Quito to issue a public warning. And they hated the way he raised electricity, gas and phone charges by up to 600 per cent when the congress watered down his tax reform proposals. So when congress voted to remove Abdala Bucaram for "mental incapacity," there was no one to defend him.

But what can we conclude about the health of the newer democracies from these three instances of dodgy legality? Is there a trend here? Not really. There are fifty newly democratic countries, from Chile, Haiti and Poland to South Africa, the Philippines, and Taiwan, where constitutional order was not violated or even slightly infringed in the past year. And the exceptional situations that recently arose

in Ecuador, Bulgaria and Pakistan occur in older democracies, too.

The collapse of the mafia-Communist regime in Bulgaria can fairly be compared to the fall of the mafia-Christian Democratic state in Italy in the early 90s. There are parallels (though much more distant ones) between the overthrow of the megalomaniac Bucaram in Ecuador in 1997 and the

fall of the megalomaniac Charles de Gaulle in France in 1968.

And the fall of the house of Bhutto? Cast your mind back to 1975, and the resignation of U.S. President Richard Nixon just days ahead of official impeachment proceedings. No two cases are exactly the same, but the older democracies have their upheavals too.

LETTERS

No nexus to Article 26

To the Editor:

THE REPORT "Jordan rejects Israeli assertion over Jordanian-owned 'absentee property'" (Jordan Times, Feb. 17, 1997) quotes the following: "Dr. Qasem as well as Badri Mulqi, ... said Israel could be charged before international courts and the international community under Article 26 of the Jordanian-Israeli peace agreement."

Such a statement was not mine, and I am not aware that it was stated by Mr. Mulqi whom I admire for his early warnings concerning the properties of Jordanians that have been under Israel's control since 1948. It is not clear what was meant by "international courts." If the report means the International Court of Justice (ICJ), it should be useful to note that it is not legally possible to bring Israel before the ICJ. When Israel accepted the ICJ jurisdiction, it did so with the proviso that the World Court would not have jurisdiction over disputes pertaining to the Arab-Israeli conflict or the Palestine question. It is to be noted that Israel acceded to the ICJ jurisdiction, with the above exclusions, about four days before it participated in the tripartite alliance (with England and France) that invaded Egypt in October 1956.

If the intention, however, is to refer to arbitrating tribunals, it is possible, under the peace treaty with Jordan, to take Israel to such a tribunal, while this is not possible under Oslo I and II. For an arbitration to be binding on the parties, they must agree "to refer any dispute between them to arbitration." The parties then indulge into details about the seat of arbitration, its terms of reference, etc. This was what we saw in the Camp David agreement between Egypt and Israel. When the dispute ensued between the two parties over Taba, Israel had no option but to go to arbitration. Had it not been so, Egypt could have done the proceedings even if Israel remained absent. This situation is similar to that under Article 29 of the Jordanian-Israeli treaty (albeit it is not a detailed clause).

Whether the report meant ICJ or an international arbitrating tribunal, there is no nexus between them and Article 26 of the treaty as the report indicated. Article 26 provides that the parties undertake to enact, within three months from the ratification date of the treaty, any legislation to its implement and to remove local legislation that is inconsistent therewith.

Anis F. Kassim,
Amman.

Failing to see the sun

To the Editor:

THIS IS in reference to Maher A. Waked's letter "Hope for a better economy" (Jordan Times, Feb. 15, 1997) which I admired for its optimism and the author's belief in Jordan's ability to become a "major commercial centre in the Middle East."

I, however, am not as enthusiastic about the pace of our "advancement". To bring in a few macro-economic indicators and surmise that they promise a bright future is inaccurate, if not misleading. For example, what consideration is given to the fact that an "acceleration of economic activities" will trigger inflation, which further deteriorates the already low buying power of the majority of the people?

Zaid F. Lama
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The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any subject they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication, however, should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld only upon request and under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing. The newspaper is not responsible for the return of unused manuscripts.

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Arts & Culture

Oscar-feted war film overcame long odds — director

By Erik Kirschbaum
Reuters

BERLIN — The British director of The English Patient said Sunday he harboured no ill-will against all the major Hollywood studios which for years had rejected his film and admitted he was still stunned by its 12 Academy Award nominations.

Anthony Minghella, who brought the romantic war-time epic set in Italy and Africa to the screen, said in an interview with Reuters

that even friends called him crazy to try to turn a decorated, if complex, novel by Canadian Michael Ondaatje of the same name into film.

"When I started out four years ago, many friends called to say I must be crazy to film the book," Minghella said as the 130-minute work made its international debut before an enthusiastic audience at the 47th Berlin Film Festival.

"They said it is oblique, not really a novel, with no characters, no story. It is more like a magazine with wonderful stories in it," he said. "As it happens, (Hollywood studios) read this book and couldn't make any sense of it either. It was a very hard job to get someone to give us the money for this."

Minghella's film has already won two Golden Globe Awards and is the odds-on favourite to win Berlin's Golden Bear Award. Its 12 Oscar nominations set a new record for British films, surpassing the 11 Richard Attenborough's Gandhi received.

"The nominations are beyond any dream anyone is entitled to have," he said.

Based on Ondaatje's 1992 Booker-Prize winning book, the film is the story of a love affair between a British woman and a German spy in Africa. With spectacular desert vistas and World War II as a backdrop, the film unfolds a moving tale as it shifts back and forth between the start and end of the war.

"It is fascinating to me that while we were making the film everyone said it would have a very limited audience and now it is having a huge audience," said



Juliette Binoche in a scene from The English Patient. The film was named in 12 Academy Award categories (Reuters photo)

Minghella, 43, who was a lecturer at Hull University before trying his hand at directing.

But Minghella said he realised the film was a long-shot.

"It was a very unpromising document: A European film about a man haunted from his war-time past, good actors but no stars and a director who had little experience."

"It was understandable that people (in Hollywood) had no faith in the film. But they were all completely wrong. I hope next time we

won't have to go around banging doors down again."

The director said funding problems had meant that actors accepted deferred salaries and the project was delayed and almost abandoned at the start.

Tipping his hat to the independent American film company Miramax, which rescued the project after a long list of others had said no, Minghella conceded he never dreamed the film would ever attract such massive attention.

"Miramax deserves credit for having the guts and the passion to make this. Everywhere else we went there were the people in the rooms with the calculators who run the numbers. But the one thing you can't calculate is emotion and passion. It is the emotion and the passion that sustains this film."

Minghella's previous films were little noticed low-budget productions: Truly Madly Deeply and Mr. Wonderful.

Although the leading actors — Juliette Binoche, Kristin

Scott-Thomas and Willem Defoe — have distinguished acting careers, none had names powerful enough to draw box office crowds the Hollywood majors count upon.

"The great advantage of the (Oscar) nominations is that might encourage recalcitrant members of the public to risk an evening to see the film," Minghella said. "We didn't have the advantage of the film being carried by a huge movie star. We wanted to cast a film full of actors rather than film stars."

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British film director Anthony Minghella (left) and actress Kristin Scott Thomas pose for photographers prior a press conference to present their film The English Patient at Berlin's 47th International Film Festival (Reuters photo)

Iran hosts 'international' film festival in Islamic atmosphere

By Mehrdad Balali
Agence France Presse

TEHRAN — Iran is playing host to an international film festival in an austere atmosphere far removed from the glitz of Hollywood, with moral rather than aesthetic values expected to dominate jury selections.

Some 60 feature-length movies are being screened at the 10-day 15th International Fajr Film Festival, which started on Feb. 10 on the 18th anniversary of the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

However, only the Iranian films are being entered for competition while the dozen foreign films available are showcased on the side-

lines. Several American movies, including three by Oscar-winning director Oliver Stone, are featured in the festival — much to the delight of Iranian movie buffs who are usually forced to turn to the video black market to see tinseltown's blockbusters.

Every day, thousands of anxious fans queue outside a dozen theatres hoping to be among the lucky ones to obtain seats, but many are disappointed.

Police wade into the frantic pushing and shoving of the crowds to make men and women form separate lines to minimise physical contact between members of

the opposite sexes. And on occasions, baton-wielding policemen charge at the crowds swarming around the theatres to disperse them and ease traffic jams created by the cinema queues in the streets.

Recently, a group of Islamic militiamen showed up in front of Azadi Theatre in northern Tehran to enforce the Islamic code of dress and conduct.

The militiamen, known as the Basijis, stopped young men dressed in fashionable Western styles to check their identities and question their links with accompanying females.

In a theatre reserved for special screenings for film

critics and reporters, women were repeatedly admonished through a loud speaker to fully cover their heads.

The Iranian movies offered this year are generally of human interest, or deal with the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq War in didactic melodramatic tales. Films from internationally-acclaimed directors such as Abbas Kiarostami and Mohsen Makhmalbaf are absent this year.

Culture Minister Mostafa Mirsalim has told the jury of five, including two ministry officials, to make their recommendations based on "moral and divine values and a sense of cultural responsibility."

"Our selections should set

an example and guide the future trend of filmmaking in the Islamic Republic," he said, quoted by movie publications.

Several revolutionary organisations have set up their own award committees to select movies according to their religious and revolutionary merits.

The Martyr Foundation said it would finance a pilgrimage to Mecca for the director of their choice.

An organisation tasked with promoting prayers in Iran will offer gold coins to any director whose film contains prayer scenes, and who works to promote the practice among youth.

"We hope the jury will

make religion its main criteria for evaluations," said an official of the prayer organisation, Hossien Vaezinejad.

But many film critics here disagree.

"The subject of aesthetic is still not fully understood here," said Ali-Reza Shemirani of Film-Video monthly. "We still judge movies from an emotional point of view."

Iranian cinema took off after the 1979 revolution, winning over 160 awards at international contests.

But Islamic fundamentalists deeply distrust the attention heaped on Iranian art movies at foreign festivals, seeing it as a "plot" to encourage apathy among filmmakers towards the revolution.

Under mounting pressure, the authorities issued a lengthy directive last year laying down strict rules for filmmaking in Iran, such as a ban on "inappropriate" close-ups of women and on movies which reflect a "negative image" of the Islamic Republic.

"We have limited resources here and films contrary to our Islamic identity and beliefs should not be expected to be made," said Ezzatollah Zarghami, the head of the Culture Ministry's Cinema Division. "We want a faultless cinema."

Abolfazl Jalili, a director whose work has been praised in European festivals, said six of his movies

had been banned by a moral watchdog council at the ministry.

"These regulations reflect not the Islamic Law, but what has become a norm in our society," director of action films, Behruz Fakhrini, complained.

Islamic "pressure groups exercise their will and the authorities listen because they are afraid of them," he added. "These groups are in the minority but they hold sway."

"Cinema is not yet fully purified in the eyes of our people. We still have many doubts and feel ambivalent about the art," said film critic, Hossein Soltan-Mohammadi.

— Milli Vanilli's victory was purged from all official history of the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences Inc. There is no longer any listing between "Miller, Roger" and "Mills, Eric," the 1989 best artist notation says only, "no award."

— Crosby, Stills and Nash shared a single Best New Artist Award in 1969. Neither Crosby, Stills or Nash ever won another, individually or in any combination.

It's too early to say if the "curse" will drag down recent winners like Sheryl Crow and Hootie and the Blowfish. But bet on Sheryl to fare better than Hootie. Female best new artists — Bette Midler, Carly Simon, Sade, Toni Braxton — have more success in avoiding the jinx.

Further proof: 1991's winner, Mr. Marc "walking in Memphis" Cohn.

Mulberry — 25 years of the best in British style

FROM THE sumptuous accessories, to its beautifully styled clothing, Mulberry has established a worldwide reputation for distinctive, high quality goods.

Taken high above the smart streets of Kensington at Richard Branson's Roof Gardens, Mulberry's menswear is cool, classic and modern. Tomato-red tartans with crisp white open-neck shirts are perfectly complemented by British shoe designer Oliver Sweeney's Hoffman chukka boots in Havana leather.

Roger Saul, the creator of Mulberry, began designing leather chokers and belts 25 years ago on the kitchen table of his London flat. Today Mulberry is a great British success story with global retail sales of over £81 million.

More than 50 shops in Europe, the United States, Scandinavia and the Far East sell the definitive English lifestyle. The range includes clothing for men and women, the Home Collection and toiletries, while the famous leather accessories are best defined by the exquisitely crafted Mulberry agendas and briefcases.

The company continues to move forward at a heady pace. A flagship store opened at the start of the year in London's Bond Street. And the company has added more prizes to its cabinet this year, including the British Export Award for Accessories by selling over 70 per cent of its goods abroad.



In May, the company also announced the placing of 28 per cent of its shares on the Alternative Investment Market, valuing the business at well over £30 million.

Mulberry can look to the future with great optimism: A flagship store opens soon

in Tokyo's fashionable Ginza district, while the expansion of the clothing range — the Roger Saul Collection (a more contemporary direction for men and women) and the Guinea — a gentlemen's bespoke service — will introduce Mulberry's and craft to an

even wider clientele. With an increasing world market eager to own its brilliantly crafted, timeless British lifestyle clothing and accessories, Mulberry's future is expected to be even more exciting and prosperous — London Press Service.

Grammy's best new artist? It's a thin line between best and bust

By Larry McShane
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Two cautionary words for this year's Grammy-winning best new artist: Milli Vanilli.

Remember Rob Pilatus and Fah Morvan, the dreadlocked pretty boys who captured the 1989 Best New Artist Award? You don't remember their victory; you remember their embarrassing exposure as lip-synching poseurs later stripped of their Grammy.

"The most notorious group of the '80s," critic John Floyd once wrote of the Vanillis, whose debut album sold 7 million copies. "Two handsome, talented artists, he added.

It's a sad tale. But that's all too often the fate of the best new artist, whose tiny gramophone statue comes with a lot of bad karma. Just ask — if you can find any of 'em — past winners like the Starland Vocal Band, Debby Boone, A Taste Of Honey, Rickie Lee Jones, Christopher Cross, Sheena Easton, Men At Work, Culture Club, Cyndi Lauper, (Pity Poor Jones, a real talent who assumed the mantle of best new artist from the hand behind the hit Boogie Oogie Oogie.)

This year's nominees carry some cachet of

hipness: The cutting edge band Garbage; the folksy, chart-topping Jewel; MTV favourites No Doubt; country's teen wonder, Leann Rimes; smooth R and B sensation The Tony Rich Project. But once upon a time, so did Marvin Hamlisch (1974 winner) and Arrested Development (1992 winner).

The award's aura of ill will really dates to the late '70s-early '80s string of "winners," a frightening mix of one-hit wonders, MTV caricatures, Pat Boone progeny and dating fodder for the artist then known as Prince.

They were, from 1976 through 1984: The Starland Vocal Band, Debby Boone, A Taste Of Honey, Rickie Lee Jones, Christopher Cross, Sheena Easton, Men At Work, Culture Club, Cyndi Lauper, (Pity Poor Jones, a real talent who assumed the mantle of best new artist from the hand behind the hit Boogie Oogie Oogie.)

Some frightening best new artist numbers: — Of the 36 bon-

ourees, 21 never returned to the winner's circle. This group includes Robert Goulet, Hamlisch, Jody Watley, Bobby Darin, Tom Jones and Mariah Carey.

— In the year they were cited, the best new artists collected 61 Grammys. In subsequent years, they collectively earned 25.

— The most precipitous drop from hero to zero: Christopher Cross, of course. He collected five awards in 1980 for his eaz-z-z listening album Sailing, but is currently on a 17-year Grammy-free streak.

Some quirky best new artist facts:

— The Beatles, winners in 1964, won only two more Grammys — Album of the Year and Best Contemporary Album in 1967 for Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band. Debby "you light up my life" Boone, the 1977 winner, matched that total with Gospel Grammys in 1980 and 1984.

— Of the 36 bon-

U.S. trade deficit in 1996 climbs to highest level in eight years

WASHINGTON (AP) — America's foreign trade deficit surged to \$114.2 billion last year, the worst performance since 1988. The deficit with China hit an all-time high and the price of crude oil rose to the highest level in six years.

The Commerce Department said Wednesday that the deficit in goods and services for all of 1996 was up 8.7 per cent from a 1995 imbalance of \$105.1 billion. In December alone, the deficit jumped 29.6 per cent to \$10.3 billion.

America's trade deficit stood at \$38.8 billion in 1992 and has risen every year that President Clinton has been in office despite the president's efforts to close the gap with a number of market-opening trade agreements.

Critics contend the rising deficits have cost millions of American jobs and show the failure of the administration's free trade doctrine.

The administration, however, argued that the continued increase in U.S. exports shows that efforts to break down foreign barriers is working. It blames the overall deficit on broader economic forces such as the disparity

between America's higher economic growth and the sluggish performances of many of its major trading partners.

The deficit with Japan actually shrank for the second year in a row, falling to \$47.7 billion in 1996, down 19 per cent from 1995 and the smallest gap since 1991. America's deficit with Japan hit an all-time high of \$65.7 billion in 1994 and then improved to \$59.1 billion in 1995.

The trade gap with China, however, is headed in the opposite direction. It jumped 17 per cent last year to \$39.5 billion, the worst showing for any country other than Japan. It marked the 11th straight annual increase in the deficit with China and analysts believe this trend will result in the deficit with China surpassing the imbalance with Japan probably this year.

America also suffered a record deficit with Mexico of \$16.2 billion, up 5.3 per cent from 1995.

Trade critics point to this statistic to show the failure of the North American Free Trade Agreement, which is eliminating trade barriers among the United States, Canada and Mexico. But the administration blames the ris-

ing deficit with Mexico on that country's severe economic troubles triggered by the devaluation of its currency in December 1994.

In December, the \$10.3 billion trade deficit was the worst showing since September. The trade imbalance had narrowed sharply in both October and November.

For the year, the \$114.2 billion deficit in goods and services was the largest imbalance since a \$115.5 billion trade gap in 1988.

The deficit in goods alone of \$187.6 billion was an all-time high. However, it was offset by a record surplus in services, such as tourism, which hit \$73.4 billion last year.

Imports of crude oil rose 18.1 per cent in 1996 to \$50.6 billion, reflecting higher prices. The volume of crude oil shipments actually dipped by 1.5 per cent but the average price per barrel rose from \$15.83 to \$18.98, the highest level since 1990.

Total U.S. exports of goods climbed 6.2 per cent to a record \$611.7 billion last year. But imports of goods were also a record, rising 6.6 per cent to \$799.3 billion.

'Foreign investment shying away from Iranian oil sector'

TEHRAN (AFP) — U.S. sanctions are contributing to a marked reluctance by foreign companies to invest in oil and gas projects in Iran, a senior oil official has said.

Mohsen Yahyavi, the deputy chairman of the Iranian parliament's oil subcommittee, told Abbar newspaper there had been little response to a dozen oil and gas projects put up for international

bids by the oil ministry in August 1995. "Despite widespread arrangements by the ministry, foreign contractors are not much interested in engaging in petroleum projects in Iran," he said.

The member of parliament blamed a general U.S. economic embargo on Iran imposed in June 1995 to punish the Islamic republic for its alleged support for international terrorism.

To tighten the sanctions, the United States passed a law in August last year to penalise non-U.S. firms making investments of over \$40 million in Iran's oil or gas sector.

Iranian officials had until now played down the impact of the U.S. sanctions on the oil industry. Oil Minister Gholamreza Aghazadeh said

in October that 130 companies from 19 countries had responded positively to Iran's bids, worth billions of dollars and offered on a buy-back basis.

Mr. Yahyavi, also a member of the National Iranian Oil Company's board of directors, called meanwhile for greater government investment to increase the capacity of crude production in Iran up to 10 million barrels a day.

WorldCare Jordan Transmitted Via Satellite A Medical Lecture from Duke University Medical Center

Under the patronage of His Excellency Dr. Arif Bataineh, Minister of Health, who was represented by Dr. Husein Jaddou, WorldCare Jordan (Telemedicine) transmitted live via satellite from Duke University Medical Center - USA a lecture entitled: "Difficult to Interpret Echoes: Prosthetic Valves" "Changing the Outcome of Coronary Artery Disease". This is one of many events that WorldCare Jordan hosts as part of its Continuing Medical Education (CME) Programme. A Ramadan meal from the Marriott Hotel was served during the transmission that

was attended by a large number of Jordanian physicians with specialties in Cardiology, Cardiovascular System, Internal Medicine, Surgery and Radiology. The physicians were overwhelmed with both the medical and technical quality of the transmission. They were able to benefit from the expertise of well-known U.S. cardiologists and exchange medical opinions with them directly.

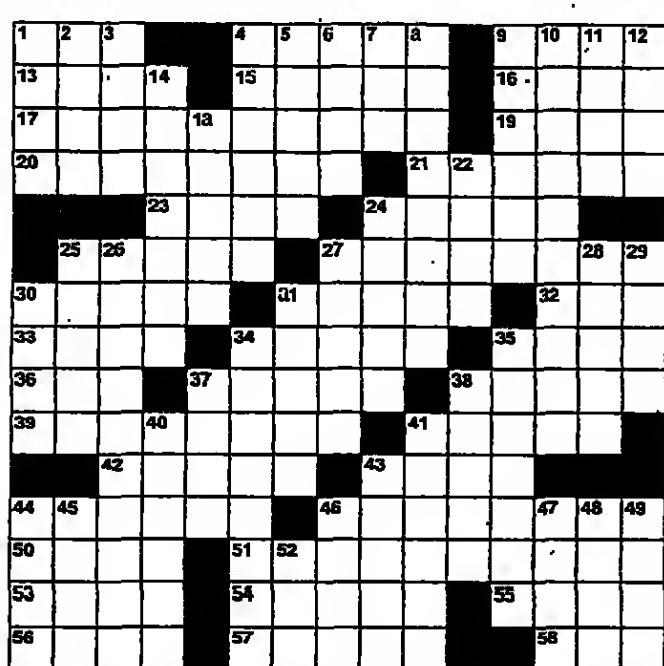
Also the U.S. panel of cardiologists found the questions asked by the Jordanian physicians who attended the transmission at WorldCare Jordan's premises, to be

interesting and important. This was the first medical lecture to be transmitted directly via satellite from the United States of America to Jordan through WorldCare International (Telemedicine). It is worth mentioning here that Duke University Medical Center, Durham-N.C. is one of the U.S. hospitals that are within WorldCare's Medical Consortium.

Other medical lectures and surgical operations dealing with various topics will be transmitted in the coming months from the most renowned hospitals in the USA.

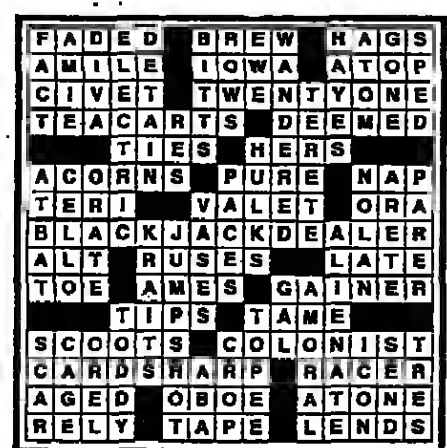
THE Daily Crossword

- ACROSS
1 Fin. expert
4 Spoke (with "up")
9 Ill temper
13 Mare fare
15 Modern Meds
16 Eve's grandson
17 Sure to occur
19 Riding high
20 Fix
21 Showing great strength
23 After flat or hard
24 Serve soup
25 Exhaust
27 Is a philatelist
30 Entrances
31 Petulant
32 Short trip
33 Disagreeably sticky
34 Digress
35 Stir to anger
38 Make do (with "out")
37 Kind of wool
38 Deal with difficulty
39 "Fantasy" figure
41 Spirit
42 Showed resentment
43 Feudal land
44 Soviet politician
46 Lawmakers
50 Alencon
51 Deteriorating
53 Help hoods
54 Discover ancestry
55 Feeble
56 Develops, in a way
57 Fourbagger
58 Woodwind, briefly



by Richard Thomas

- DOWN
1 Coconut fiber
2 Glazier's insert
3 Env. address abbr.
4 French astronomer
5 Incensed
6 Whittle
7 Run out
8 Without cheer
9 Hound
10 Well-off
11 Spoils
12 Notice
14 Like the weather, at times
18 Olympian Janet
22 In a lazy way
24 Pertaining to knowledge
25 Very successful
26 Lacking expression
27 Physician
28 Realty sign
29 Drove at Indy
30 Mint stamps
31 Knight mare?
34 Forte
35 Reindeer landing
37 Trailer
38 Sharpe
40 Gem faces
41 Spice
43 Duel
44 Chunk
45 Inhibition
46 Thailand
47 Musical work
48 Author Jaffe
49 Underworld stream
52 Rio de —



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The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	SGD	HKD
US Dollar	1.0000	1.6966	0.6200	1.4876	124.23	1.3595	1688.34	1.9046	5.7284
DEM	0.5900	1.0000	0.3756	0.5841	163.26	0.6558	806.42	1.1723	3.3783
GBP	1.6128	2.6730	1.0000	2.7962	200.43	2.1828	2724.31	3.0733	9.2450
CHF	0.6722	1.7135	0.4133	1.0000	133.79	0.7013	846.35	1.2199	3.4506
JPY	0.0080	1.3646	0.4984	1.1965	1.0000	0.0074	8.0000	0.0070	0.0215
CAD	0.7450	1.2555	0.4581	1.4187	135.93	1.0000	125.36	1.3593	3.9060
ITL	0.0006	1.0037	0.3868	0.8880	1361.47	0.8042	1.0000	11.27	3.3909
SGD	0.5061	0.8500	0.3125	0.8200	143.75	0.7290	87.12	1.0000	2.7777
HKD	0.0779	1.2736	0.1091	0.2936	7.7536	0.0779	7.7536	0.0779	1.0000
FR Franc	0.1745	0.2859	0.1081	0.2546	21.65	0.2371	33.22	33.2200	-

Energy		
Oil	Last	Previous
Brent	21.40	21.15
WTI	22.55	22.45
Bony	21.40	21.15
Dubai	21.50	21.37
UL Gas	205.00	205.00

Metal Prices		
Metal	Bid	Offer
Gold (oz's)	346.55	347.05
Silver (oz's)	5.19	5.21
Platinum (oz's)	367	368
NI (5 Months)	NI/NA	NI/NA
CU (3 Months)	NI/NA	NI/NA
Zinc (3 Months)	NI/NA	NI/NA
Lead (3 Months)	NI/NA	NI/NA
NI (3 Months)	NI/NA	NI/NA

Energy		
Commodity	Last	Delivery
Coffee (c/lb's)	165.83	Spot
Sugar (c/lb's)	12.52	Spot
Sugar (c/lb's)	311	Spot
Wheat (c/lb's)	11.50	Spot
Soya (c/lb's)	22.43	Spot
Yell (c/lb's)	11.77	Spot
Barley (c/lb's)	2.27	Spot
Rice (c/lb's)	4.70	Spot

Mid-East Currencies					
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
SA Riyal	0.2966	0.4527	0.16533	0.39182	33.151
AE Dirham	0.3725	0.6256	0.16998	0.40996	35.676
KW Dinar	3.2938	5.59284	2.04246	4.90198	409.5
QTR Dinar	0.3770	0.6248	1.64474	3.99191	329.815
CY Pound	1.9625	3.2864	1.2149	2.9166	243.565

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)					
Period	1 -	3 -	6 -	9 -	1 -
C'y	Month	Months	Months	Months	Year
USD	5.23	5.34	5.40	5.43	5.63
JPY	5.19	5.28	5.30	5.33	5.75
GBP	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.56	0.53
DEM	3.24	3.27	3.27	3.24	3.00
FRF	3.22	3.24	3.26	3.23	3.30
CHF	3.20	3.25	3.25	3.28	3.28
ITL	7.44	7.26	7.11	6.81	6.81

* JOD Cross Rates		
Currency	Bid	Sell
US Dollar	0.708	0.710
GB Sterling	0.1969	0.1978
DE Mark	0.4195	0.4216
CH Franc	0.4405	0.4429
FR Franc	0.1242	0.1248
JP Yen	0.0070	0.0073
NI Guider	0.3738	0.3757
IT Lira	0.4203	0.4224

* Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 1997

(June 22 to July 21) Even if you are tempted to overspend today, stay within your budget and thereby you won't find yourself short of funds when it really counts. Don't make any foolish investments which could cost you much needed funds.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Keep busy at your career activities today and forget about social matters at this time. Avoid becoming involved in any disagreements at home with your loved ones and thereby you can maintain harmony within your residence.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 21) You may have made an imprudent promise today which you'll find very difficult to get out of. Try to improve the situation at home later this evening so that you can maintain harmony between your loved ones.

LIBRA: (September 22 to October 21) Try to be of help to some friends today who are having a rough time and then you will receive praise and goodwill. Handle some correspondence you've put off for some time and drive carefully later this evening.

SCORPIO: (October 22 to November 21) Be very careful and precise today when handling any financial matters. Be alert to any property repairs later this evening which can't wait any longer or you will notice that your residence will lose its beauty and value.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You can labour today on the details of a new idea, however, don't take any action on it yet. Stick to investments later this evening to investments

which you know are sound and have proven to be productive.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) You've made an investment which concerns you, and today is the time to get out of it gracefully. Improve your relationships at home with your loved ones and thereby you can maintain harmony there.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) A good friend can tell you why today you're getting the cold shoulder from a fellow associate. Take no risks while walking or driving on the highway and thereby you can get out any difficulties.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Decide what can be done today to improve your image in general. Don't make any changes at home later this evening which could upset your loved ones and create a difficult situation which needs a peaceful resolution.

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Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n' Jeff



HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 1997

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Rigler Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Follow the wishes of your family today and create more harmony at home with your loved ones. This is a good time to labour on improving the appearance there and thereby you can increase its value and enjoyment.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) This morning is a good time to take care of correspondence and other communications which have been delayed, whether for business or personal reasons. This evening will be a good time to relax with your loved ones.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) An opportunity to make more money with your career activities in the days ahead will present itself. Later this evening is a good time to labour on improving your budget so that you will have extra funds for a rainy day.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Quiet talks today with good friends at lunch can yield some ideas which will benefit everyone greatly in the long run. Later this evening will be a good time to meet with knowledgeable people and discuss a plan of action on a project.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Make a private plan today for business success in the days ahead, however, don't worry about the details until later. Do a nice favour for your loved ones and they will appreciate the gesture of your kindness and respect.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Make some plans today for your social life, however, you should not go out tonight; stay home and rest up instead for the days ahead. This is a good time to ask favours of friends who will give you accurate information.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) This morning is a good time to handle credit matters which could be damaging if not attended to. Be more attentive to your superior and thereby you can receive the success and recognition which you have long desired.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You can rely on your intuition this morning, however, later this evening on it may be flawed, so stick to conventional methods which are reliable. Later this evening you can get together with close friends and have some fun.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) If you get some promises out of the way this morning, you'll have a satisfied feeling all day. Try to avoid any disagreements today and thereby you can maintain harmony in your career activities and at home with loved ones.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) If you are loyal to a fellow associate and back his or her ideas today, you'll get more cooperation in the days ahead. Be sure to do your share of the career activities which you are assigned and make a good impression.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) You can reach points of agreement with others quickly today, so try to impress your ideas on as many people as possible. Later this evening will be a good time to go out to a romantic location with your mate.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Getting into some new social situations today will make you very happy, however, don't be extravagant. Be sure to drive with great care on the highway later this evening and thereby avoid any difficulties.

Birthstone of February: Amethyst — Onyx.

ARE THERE ANY... Business from... United States have set... point head with Oman... leading to benefit... growing investment of... funds in the two... countries, an Oman offi... and Monday... The U.S. based T... Arab Investment F... (AIF) has a paid up... of \$100 million and... could be doubled later... Mubarak and Al-Farw... president of the O... Secto... Mubarak... Capital has... when subscribed O... and Al-Farwani have... raised \$15 million

Contractors... payment

CONTRACTORS... come from finan... and... has not... according to ab... increasing attend... You... that tem... the... entered by... contractors point... affect the con... and... from finan... engineers, it... spread the ass... authorities to at... which is threaten... The contractors... marries as the N... chair for non-... A project

Ports Co... reduce loading

the BOARD of... to adapt a de... changes on Jordan... will be recom... renewal, official... aims at support... and does not me... The government plan... at port to face... especially ter... then ports in ad... of marine trade... completed by... two agreem... and Cons... British firm... and prep... port in Aq... Al Aswajq

THE BETTER... RASBERGEN

"No m... they're a t

JUMIE

IDEEA

HIMEC

YARPER
COLL
REJESY

U.S. investors create fund for Oman, Jordan

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Businessmen from the United States have set up a joint fund with Oman and Jordan to benefit from growing investment opportunities in the two Arab countries, an Omani official said Monday.

The U.S.-based Trans-Arab Investment Fund (TAIF) has a paid-up capital of \$45 million and it could be doubled later, said Mahmoud Al Jarwani, chief executive of the Omani Muscat Securities Exchange.

"The capital has been wholly subscribed. Omani and Jordanian investors contributed \$15 million

while the remaining capital was subscribed by investors from the United States," he told AFP by telephone.

The fund will invest in Oman and Jordan in export-oriented projects covering industry, farming and other fields.

It has two branches in Oman and Jordan to manage investment there and operations are expected to start in the first half of 1997, Mr. Jarwani said.

He said the U.S. businessmen opted for two countries for the fund's activities to reduce investment risks and diversify their portfolios.

"Those investors chose

Jordanian reforms win EU praise

By Ghalia Alul
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — European officials Wednesday praised Jordan for implementing the economic reform programme which will qualify the country to receive 40 million ECUs, or European Currency Units, (\$51 million) in grant from the European Union (EU).

Harold Cool, Jordan's desk officer at the European Commission in Brussels told a press conference that Jordan has lived up to its commitments of privatising public sector enterprises, amending and enacting new economic laws, and endeavouring to help the low income groups to withstand the impact of economic reforms through the enhancement of a social safety net.

"What we are keen on is Jordan's considerations for the social sector through a social safety net," said Mr. Cool.

Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti announced in Parliament in December the allocation of JD400 million, six year "social safety net" programme which, he said, would go a long way in alleviating the problems suffered by the poor and improving liv-

ing standards.

The project calls for additional capital investment to introduce and improve infrastructure in poorer areas, financing of small scale projects to help generate income and large-scale training programmes to rehabilitate the poor and unemployed, Mr. Kabariti said.

The government is anticipating financial assistance from donor nations and other sources in order to implement the programme through the National Aid Fund (NAF).

The need for a social safety net was underlined when unrest broke out in the south after the government remodelled subsidies for wheat and fodder.

Yves Gazzo, head of

the Delegation of the European Commission in Jordan, said during the press conference that although Jordan achieved progress in some fields of economic reform, it still needs to achieve more progress in other fields.

The EU and Jordan in September signed a financial agreement under which the EU allocated 100 million ECUs (\$128 million) in support of the Kingdom's balance of payments.

The grant also aims at alleviating the external fiscal pressure on the Jordanian economy and pave the way for a fruitful association agreement between Jordan and the EU.

A tranche of 60 million ECUs has been dispersed in October.

The possibility of dispersing the second tranche of 40 million ECUs, Mr. Cool said, will depend on the results of the delegation's report submitted to the European Commission on Jordan's current economic situation.

Ministry of Planning Secretary General Nabil Ammari said earlier this week that Jordan has met all the European requirements and expected the amount to be released by the end of May.

The financial package which also supports Jordan's role in the peace process, comes from the MEDA programme, a new EU aid instrument adopted in 1996, allocating a budget of 4.6 billion ECUs (\$5.8 billion) in grants for the Mediter-

anean countries for the years 96-99.

The MEDA programme is based on the principles of the Barcelona Declaration of November 1995 launching a Euro-Mediterranean partnership and reinforcing financial and technical support from the EU to its Mediterranean partners.

Countries covered by MEDA are Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Cyprus, Egypt, Israel, Malta, Turkey, the West Bank and Gaza.

Since 1977, the total EU aid and loans to Jordan amount to 329 million ECUs (about \$400 million).

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic press

Contractors say government delaying payments of JD10 million

**** CONTRACTORS IMPLEMENTING** water projects are suffering from financial straits as the Ministry of Water and Irrigation has not paid them their certified and due bills amounting to about JD10 million. The contractors' bill to a meeting, attended by the board of the Contractors' Association, that non-payment of their dues was causing them financial and operational problems on top of other difficulties suffered by the contracting sector in general.

The contractors pointed out that further delays will negatively affect the continuity of work at projects under implementation and future projects in addition to problems arising from financial obligations to sub-contractors, labourers, engineers, traders, banks and other parties.

They requested the association to intervene with the concerned authorities to arrive at quick solutions to this dilemma which is threatening the future of the contracting companies. The contractors are now shuffling in vain between two ministries as the Ministry of Water and Irrigation has put the blame for non-payment on the Ministry of Finance (Al Dostour).

Ports Corporation likely to reduce loading cost for exporters

**** THE BOARD** of directors of the Ports Corporation is expected to adopt a decision this month to cut loading fees and charges on Jordanian exports by 50 per cent. Such a decision will be recommended to the Council of Ministers for approval, official marine sources said. The decision which aims at supporting Jordanian exports exempts bulk loads and does not include exemptions, fines and carrying expenses.

The government plans to build two new wharfs for the industrial port to face the expected increase in Jordanian exports, especially fertilisers, and to counter competition from other ports in addition to attracting more vessels and boosting marine trade activity. The two wharfs are expected to be completed by September.

Recently, two agreements were signed between the Ports Corporation and Consolidated Consultants in cooperation with the British firm Rendel Palmer and Tritton to study the designs and prepare tender documents to build a new industrial port in Aqaba and to maintain the wharfs at the port (Al Aswaq).

Survey: Asia tops expansion plans of U.S. firms

SINGAPORE (AFP) — Asia will be the priority destination of investments by U.S. manufacturers over the next five years, according to the findings of a survey.

"Despite potential political and economic uncertainties, manufacturers are forging ahead into Asia's emerging markets," the Business Times newspaper quoted the survey by New York-based Deloitte and Touche Consultancy as saying.

"Manufacturing executives are now viewing countries in Asia not only as viable production bases but also as lucrative consumer markets for finished goods and exports," it said.

The survey covered 100 U.S. manufacturers, three quarters of whom put Asia first on their global expansion plans to the year 2001, the report said.

Nine out of 10 plan joint ventures to establish a "foothold" in the region and leverage on the expertise and market knowledge of local firms.

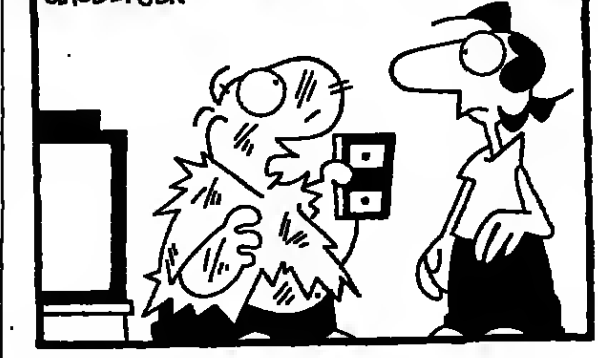
With Asia, almost two-thirds of the respondents said their focus would be on penetrating the Chinese market.

The survey said many Asian countries were beginning to rival — and in some cases surpass — developed economies in consumer demand while U.S. manufacturers are trying to tap overseas markets amid rising competition at home.

"These mutually reinforcing trends, coupled with advances in communications and technology, make Asia very attractive for manufacturers," Deloitte and Touche said.

JORDAN FINANCIAL MARKET											
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - SAMSAM											
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179											
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR WEDNESDAY 19/02/1997											
LAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	COMPANY'S NAME	P/E	DIV.	NO. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE	1.00+	1.00-
266.000	205.000	ARAB BANK	14.3	1.34	7	2440	635960	261.00	262.00	1.00+	1.00+
2.100	1.900	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	E	0.00	66	68822	142661	2.07	2.03	0.04-	0.04-
5.500	4.250	CHIEF AMMAN BANK	10.3	0.00	2	4600	23020	5.10	5.00	1.00+	1.00+
3.600	2.900	BANK OF JORDAN	11.7	0.00	3	650	2104	3.25	3.23	0.02-	0.02-
2.630	2.120	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	5.3	5.97	3	2100	4893	2.33	2.33	0.00	0.00
5.250	4.250	THE HOUSING BK.	12.6	2.93	15	46757	225629	4.72	4.71	0.01-	0.01-
2.550	2.440	JOR. EDU. BANK	20.1	0.00	16	4475	12341	2.74	2.74	0.00	0.00
1.090	880	JOR. GULF BANK	5.4	7.78	12	3800	3420	9.2	9.2	0.00	0.00
4.180	3.480	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	18.5	0.00	7	1200	4629	3.88	3.86	0.02-	0.02-
3.040	1.600	BEIT AL-TAL (BEITRA)	7.0	9.38	1	250	400	1.62	1.60	0.02-	0.02-
BANK SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 199.56 %CHG: +0.13 132 135094 1055076											
2.830	1.830	JOR. FRENCH INSUR.	5.5	10.31	1	50	97	1.95	1.94	0.01-	0.01-
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 120.16 %CHG: -0.05 1 50 97											
1.830	1.450	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	11.6	7.19	17	22187	37270	1.68	1.67	0.01-	0.01-
1.560	1.280	JOR. ELECTRICITY	9.5	6.90	4	1300	1596	1.45	1.45	0.00	0.00
1.580	1.080	KAZI, PORTFOLIO	0	0.00	16	14450	17881	1.24	1.24	0.00	0.00
1.050	820	KAZI, PORTFOLIO	21.1	3.92	9	7175	6816	9.95	9.95	0.00	0.00
1.220	960	SARMA EDUCATION	9	0.00	1	500	525	1.06	1.05	0.01-	0.01-
2.230	1.810	UNIFIED CO.	10.6	4.98	37	14750	23649	2.35	2.35	0.00	0.00
1.200	960	UNION LAND DEV.	5	0.00	1	750	608	0.61	0.61	0.00	0.00
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 110.76 %CHG: -0.23 87 609123 94343											
3.730	3.060	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	19.7	2.91	7	574	1970	3.50	3.44	0.06-	0.06-
3.500	2.710	JOR. PROSPERITY MINES	36.0	0.00	2	150	503	3.35	3.35	0.00	0.00
6.100	4.950	ARAB POTASH CO.	16.2	3.33	5	1275	7275	6.07	6.00	0.07-	0.07-
10.400	8.720	JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	10.1	8.00	2	270	2700	10.01	10.00	0.01-	0.01-
1.590	1.150	WOOLLEN INDUSTRIES	57.7	0.00	4	1800	1340	1.30	1.30	0.00	0.00
3.520	1.650	INDUSTRIAL COM. ASS.	35.9	0.00	16	2800	2786	2.70	2.67	0.03-	0.03-
7.850	6.420	JOR. WOODEN MILLS	8.9	3.58	2	300	1292	6.95	6.96	0.01+	0.01+
4.500	3.040	ARAB PAPER CO.	20.6	5.32	18	3985	14541	3.78	3.76	0.02-	0.02-
7.050	4.250	DAR AL-BAHAR PT. TRV.	13.4	4.08	7	2350	11478	4.90	4.90	0.00	0.00
9.860	450	LYTHKOSTOCK & POLISH	9	0.00	27	16000	9453	59	59	0.00	0.00
1.420	1.060	ARAB PAPER CO. TRD.	7.9	8.85	1	150	176	1.27	1.27	0.00	0.00
2.020	1.540	SEASONAL INDUS.	9.6	9.23	12	6150	4008	6.65	6.65	0.00	0.00
1.540	1.330	LYTHKOSTOCK & POLISH	9	0.00	7	1700	1805	1.06	1.06	0.00	0.00
3.250	2.880	UNIV. CHEM. INDUS.	66.1	0.00	6	1600	3550	2.60	2.50	0.10-	0.10-
3.730	2.130	KAZI, CABLE WIRE. RTAC	14.0	0.00	1	250	575	2.30	2.30	0.00	0.00
1.170	870	JOR. SULPHUR-CHRM	21.5	0.00	1	150	193	1.79	1.77	0.02-	0.02-
1.670	1.080	JOR. SULPHUR-CHRM	21.5	0.00	12	3700	5624	1.44	1.52	0.08-	0.08-
2.940	1.440	UNIV. HOUS. INDUS.	5.2	11.76	30	14550	25218	1.73	1.70	0.03-	0.03-
1.840	1.140	JOR. LUMS. RESOURCES	17.0	0.00	32	11330	15288	1.36	1.35	0.01-	0.01-
1.270	840	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	24.7	0.00	7	1777	1431	0.92	0.92	0.00	0.00
2.450	1.750	KU - KAY READY WEAR	P	0.00	7	2550	4789	1.86	1.87	0.01+	0.01+
1.370	1.080	INTL. TOBACCO	28.9	0.00	13	10700	12135	1.22	1.23	0.01+	0.01+
1.470	930	UNION CH. & VEG.	24.9	0.00	11	5400	5454	1.02	1.01	0.01-	0.01-
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 116.14 %CHG: -0.87 228 891261 140688											
GRAND TOTAL INDEX: 156.29 %CHG: -0.29 448 285127 1290203											
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR WEDNESDAY 19/02/1997											
7.000	440	CENTRAL CUST. STORAGE	19.3	0.00	3	2450	1181	0.49	0.48	0.01-	0.01-
7.990	800	JOR. TRADE FAC.	14.4	0.00	30	56250	30376	0.56	0.54	0.02-	0.02-
7.910	370	ARAB FIN. INVEST.	0	0.00	20	37700	17336	0.85	0.86	0.01+	0.01+
6.440	440	JOR. INDUS. MACH. JEMCO	0	0.00	3	1250	325	0.26	0.26	0.00	0.00
7.910	530	ARAB FOOD & MED.	0	0.00	6	7650	4810	0.62	0.63	0.01+	0.01+
1.690	1.300	KAZI, CHLORENE	0	0.00	4	2250	3173	1.41	1.41	0.00	0.00
9.860	450	LYTHKOSTOCK & POLISH	9	0.00	1	150	176	1.27	1.27	0.00	0.00
8.820	520	KAZI, TEXTILE	0	0.00	13	9100	5096	0.57	0.56	0.01-	0.01-
6.680	400	KAZI, MULT. ENG. HANICO	0	0.00	24	56950	27690	0.48	0.50	0.02+	0.02+
4.970	430	KAZI, MULT. ENG. HANICO	0	0.00	1	500	300	0.59	0.60	0.01+	0.01+
9.990	720	JORDAN STEEL	0	0.00	15	10880	8161	0.75	0.76	0.01+	0.01+
1.330	1.020	UNION TOBACCO 75%	0	0.00	5	2250	1741	1.03	1.03	0.00	0.00
7.770	570	KAZI, PHARM. 65%	0	0.00	6	1818	465	0.60	0.61	0.01+	0.01+
7.730	380	ZKAS. ENG.	0	0.00	10	9895	4422	0.44	0.45	0.01+	0.01+
1.020	800	ARAB INT. FOOD FACT.	69.5	0.00	1	2000	1980	0.95	0.99	0.04+	0.04+
9.950	530	MED. EAST COMPLEX	8.0	0.00	22	24400	16224	0.67	0.68	0.01+	0.01+
GRAND TOTAL 165 225393 133354											
L: Listed during the past 12 months P: P/E ratio is 100 or more N: Negative P/E E: Earnings is zero or N/A for the most recent year											

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HIME: _ _ _ _

YARPER: _ _ _ _

REJESY: _ _ _ _

Print answer here: HE _ _ _ _

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Answer: What the shoe repairman wanted his customers to be - WELL HEELED

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Senna trial will be kept low key

Bologna (AFP) — The trial for the manslaughter of world champion Ayrton Senna, who died in a racing crash in the San Marino Grand Prix at nearby Imola on May 1, 1995, opens Thursday in a deliberately low key and will continue at a slow pace for many months.

Only lawyers will attend the procedural opening day, the next session on Feb. 28, and other hearings, which will take up two days each week, sources close to the case say.

None of the six accused, including the owners and designer of Senna's Williams car, nor witnesses such as world champions Damon Hill, Senna's teammate, and Michael Schumacher, his chief rival, will be called until late April or early May.

The judge and lawyers involved recently agreed that witness hearings should be timed to avoid local major events such as the April 27 Grand Prix at Imola, and conflicts with the busy world championship season, with its races usually every second weekend.

From Williams, the accused are team owner Frank Williams, his partner and technical director Patrick Head, and the car's chief designer, Adrian Newey.

The other accused are: Federico Benetton, managing director of the Sociea Allestimento Gestione Impianti E Servizi (SAGIS), which rents the Imola circuit from the local authorities and runs events; the then Federation Internationale De L'Automobile (FIA) circuit inspector Roland Bruynseraede, who declared the circuit safe; and clerk of the course (race director) Giorgio Poggi.

All have been charged with "omicidio colposo," culpable homicide or manslaughter, a less serious offence in Italian law than in Anglo-Saxon law. The maximum sentence is five years' jail, but most penalties are short, suspended terms.

Investigating magistrate Maurizio Passarini brought the charges after a technical report by Prof. Enrico Lorenzini of Bologna university's school of engineering. It concluded steering failure caused by a faulty weld sent the car out of control into the wall at the 300 kph Tamburello.



Flowers and dedications adorn the spot on the Imola racetrack of the fatal crash of former Brazilian Formula One driver Ayrton Senna. Formula One team chief Frank Williams and five other people go on trial February 20 charged with the manslaughter of Senna, one of the greatest drivers in motor racing history (Reuters photo)

Williams strongly rejects the allegation. It says its telemetry showed the steering working normally and that the column broke when the car hit the wall. Head said last week that although he accepted the results of the metallurgical examination, he contested the interpretation.

Senna's car was impounded and apart from a brief inspection just after the crash, Williams has not been allowed to study the wreckage.

Head said their lawyers were originally told their applications to see the car were "too early" and that since the charges have been laid, they have been told it is "too late."

The charges against the officials are understood to allege the track edge had a slight dip which allowed Senna's car to become partly airborne and would have prevented his controlling it had the steering been intact. A major hump at the apex of Tamburello which Senna's car is known to have scraped, may also be involved.

Last Sunday, a British newspaper published a photo appearing to show that before the crash, Senna's car hit a piece of

Philippoussis upset, Chang advances in Memphis

MEMPHIS (R) — Big-hitting Australian Mark Philippoussis returned to the tennis wars for the first time in nearly four months at the St Jude Tournament on Tuesday, but it was a short-lived comeback.

The 10th-seeded Philippoussis, who received a first-round bye, was unable to shake off the rust from his lengthy layoff and fell in a second-round match to unseeded Swede Magnus Norman 6-4 7-5.

"It is very hard to take anything positive from the match today," said the Australian, who had been sidelined since the Paris Open last October with tennisitis in his right forearm.

Three other seeded players, including top seed Michael Chang, opened with second round victories Tuesday.

Chang, playing this event for the 10th straight year, posted a 6-2 6-4 victory over Australian Patrick Rafter to earn a third round match with 15th seed Kenneth Carlsen of Denmark, a 7-6 6-3 winner over Dutchman Jacco Eltingh.

Doubles star Todd Woodbridge, the eighth seed, advanced with a 6-4 7-6 victory over Sebastian Lareau of Canada.

A semifinal loser to eventual champion Pete Sampras last year, Chang said: "It would definitely be nice to win here."

"There aren't a whole lot of tournaments I've played in the U.S. That I haven't won. The U.S. Open is the other."

Despite admitting to being nervous, Philippoussis got off to an astonishingly good start, belting four aces in the first game. But he recorded just one more ace in the set and Norman broke him at love in the third game.

Norman, a rising Swede who extended Andre Agassi to three sets last week in San Jose, said he was not worried by Philippoussis's strong start.

"I thought since he hadn't played a match since (October) and that I had been playing a lot that I would have a good chance."

After dropping the opening set, Philippoussis jumped out to a 5-2 lead in the second. But the Australian dropped the next five games, hurt by two double faults while serving for the set and a string of unforced errors the rest of the way.

JSYIF suspends Aswaq writers, takes part in AIPS World Congress

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — While a busy month awaits the Jordan Sports and Youth Information Federation (JSYIF) with a series of local and regional championships to cover, the executive board Tuesday announced that it was temporarily suspending Al Aswaq newspaper sports writers from accompanying the Kingdom's sports delegations abroad.

The decision comes after repeated incidents in which Al Aswaq newspaper contravened JSYIF by-laws and continued to ignore articles submitted by JSYIF writers during local and Arab championships.

"The decision was warranted because Al Aswaq, like the rest of Jordan's major dailies and weeklies, is member of the JSYIF which precludes it from reporting on certain issues being covered by the JSYIF writers," explained a board member.

Informed sources said the JSYIF had repeatedly contacted Al Aswaq and warned them that their actions would

would lead to such measures but they refused to conform. During its latest meeting, the JSYIF also decided to take part in the International Sports Press Association (AIPS) World Congress in Oviedo, Spain May 10-19.

The JSYIF also decided to assign five sports writers to cover upcoming championships. They include:

— Al Dastour to cover the national soccer team's matches in Oman March 6-12.

— Jordan Television for the Qatar Equestrian Championship, March 19-26.

— Al Rai to cover the national soccer team's matches in Syria, March 21-24.

— Al Dastour for the Emirates Equestrian Championship, April 7-11.

— Al Hadath weekly for the Asian World Cup qualifiers in the United Arab Emirates April 6-24.

A three-member committee was also formed to cover the events of the Arab Junior Weightlifting Championships which will be held in Amman April 7-11.

Stich crashes out, Henman survives scare in Antwerp

ANTWERP (R) — Defending champion Michael Stich, furious over some disputed line calls, crashed to a 7-6 6-4 defeat by fellow German Kevin Goellner in the first round of the European Community championship on Tuesday.

Earlier, World No. 19 Tim Henman came perilously close to a second consecutive first-round defeat before beating Spanish wild card entry Sergi Bruguera 6-3 4-6 6-4.

Former Wimbledon champion Stich lost the first-set tiebreak 8-6 after having led 5-2 and saw his concentration undermined by some questionable line calls.

Stich, beaten in the first round of last week's Marseille open by Czech

Daniel Vacek, called for the ATP supervisor midway through the second set but his pleas to have a linesman substituted and the umpire's call revoked fell on deaf ears.

"The umpire made some terrible calls at very important stages of the match and basically they cost me the first set and probably the second," said Stich.

"The line judge made these two mistakes, too, but the umpire is supposed to help his lines persons when they don't do a good job."

He admitted he had played well below par but was still better than Goellner.

"Stich said he had been bothered by a sore shoulder for the past seven months but had ruled out surgery

because he would be sidelined for several months.

Henman, beaten by German qualifier Martin Sinner in the first round of last week's Dubai Open, made a fluent start and appeared to be heading for a comfortable victory over former French open winner Bruguera until his concentration wavered towards the end of the second set.

"I wasn't able to finish the job off and that's where I probably made life difficult for myself," Henman said.

He did not recover his poise until midway through the final set, a scorching passing shot down the line giving him a decisive service break in the ninth game. An ace in the following game gave him victory

after two hours.

"I was able to hang in there and got my opportunity in the third set and was able to hang on to it. I'm pleased to come through a match like that. I needed it," said Henman, who won his first professional title in Sydney last month.

Henman plays Swede Mikael Tillstrom in the second round, their first meeting.

Ukrainian Andrei Medvedev lost 7-6 6-2 to former Olympic champion Marc Rosset of Switzerland after wasting a 5-2 lead in the first set.

The top four seeds, including Goran Ivanisevic and Boris Becker, enter the fray on Wednesday.

Leicester rue missed chances against Wimbledon

LONDON (AFP) — Leicester were left rueing missed opportunities after being held to a goalless draw by Premiership rivals Wimbledon in the first-leg of their League Cup semi-final clash on Tuesday.

Roared on by a capacity home crowd and buoyed by Sunday's FA Cup fightback against Chelsea, Leicester dominated their high-flying opponents.

But after failing to convert a string of good chances, Leicester will concede that Wimbledon now hold the advantage going into the second leg at Selhurst Park.

Eoghan Under-21 striker Emile Heskey came close to giving Leicester an early lead

in a dull first-half when he showed his explosive pace and burst past Wimbledon defender Kenny Cunningham into the penalty area.

But Heskey, recalled after missing Sunday's 2-2 FA Cup draw with Chelsea through suspension, fired in a fierce shot which rebounded off the body of Wimbledon keeper Neil Sullivan to safety.

Leicester, in their first major semi-final since 1982, suffered a blow when midfielder Robert Ullathorne, making his debut only 24 hours after signing from Spanish club Osasuna, was stretched off with a leg injury.

Heskey again threatened danger when he ran at the Wimbledon defence and his 25-yard shot was deflected only a yard wide with Sullivan scrambling across his goal.

Wimbledon came more into the game and Vinnie Jones sent a powerful header only narrowly wide of the near post following an in-swinging free kick from Alan Kimble.

Another long throw from Jones picked out Marcus Gayle at the near post, but he directed his header straight at Leicester keeper Kasey Keller.

Leicester's Muzzy Izzet, back from suspension, had a good chance to break the deadlock a minute before half-time when he found himself in space 15 yards out, but he screwed his shot

wide. Leicester squandered another golden chance to take the lead in the 55th minute.

Heskey went close again after 70 minutes when he directed a header a foot wide of the post. But it was veteran striker Steve Claridge who missed Leicester's best chance after the break.

Seizing upon a dreadful back pass by Cunningham wide on the right, the Leicester striker bore down on the penalty area before cutting inside from the touchline and firing his shot inches wide of the far post.

Heskey was inches away from breaking the deadlock 10 minutes from time when he skipped past two defenders and unleashed a ferocious low shot from 20 yards which ricocheted off the post to safety.

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WEST: ♠1042, ♥973, ♦QJ1052, ♣J74
EAST: ♠973, ♥QAK988, ♦Q5, ♣J70
SOUTH: ♠J5, ♥43, ♦AK1063, ♣AK93
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1NT Pass 1NT Pass
Opening lead: Two of ♣
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New York Knicks' forward Cedric Ceballos Manning (15) as they play against the New York Madlons.

Stark with lo

NEW YORK (R) — Stark claimed a victory in the buzzer to finish as the Knicks edged the Nets 95-92.

A winner by Jason Kidd, who scored 11 points in the fourth quarter, helped the Knicks win the check inside.

After Houston missed the jumper, but the rebound bounced to Stark, who dribbled behind the key and let the shot go just before the buzzer.

Leaping forward, I took the rebound and put it down, Stark, who scored 11 points in the fourth quarter, helped the Knicks win the check inside.

Leaping forward, I took the rebound and put it down, Stark, who scored 11 points in the fourth quarter, helped the Knicks win the check inside.

Leaping forward, I took the rebound and put it down, Stark, who scored 11 points in the fourth quarter, helped the Knicks win the check inside.

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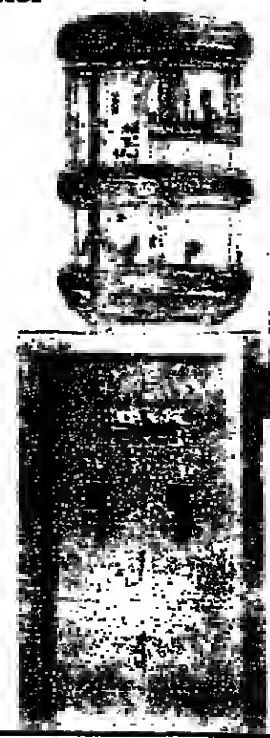
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Israeli police drag away a bedouin teenager who was injured while being evicted on Wednesday from an encampment near the West Bank settlement of Maale Adumim where Israel wants to continue building homes for Israelis (Reuters photo)

Israel evicts 12 bedouin families for settlement

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israeli police on Wednesday forcibly removed the last 12 bedouin families from West Bank land where they had lived for 40 years to make room for an expanded Jewish settlement near Jerusalem, witnesses said.

Men from the Jahalin clan had to be carried away by police to trucks, while female police officers accompanied the women and children.

Foreign workers then loaded up the bedouins' belongings into the trucks as bulldozers demolished their encampment and houses made of sheet metal.

It was the biggest single operation against the Jahalin since the army began relocating the families in mid-January so that Maale Adumim, already the biggest Jewish settlement in the West Bank, can expand.

At least one person was arrested and two hurt last

week when troops tore down tents and forced 11 families into trucks to be taken to an alternative camp set up on the outskirts of Jerusalem.

Jahalin clan members complain that the new site, to Abu Dis, is near the main Jerusalem garbage dump and does not provide sufficient land for the tribe to live and keep its herds of goats and sheep.

Wednesday's operation brought to 29 the number of Jahalin families forced away from Maale Adumim since the start of the year.

During the operation, Arab Israeli Member of Parliament Taleh Sanaa clashed with police over the forced evacuation and filed a complaint, but officials said the area was a closed military zone.

The Jahalin clan has lived in shacks and tents outside Maale Adumim since the 1950s after they were expelled by Israeli authorities from their original homes in the southern

desert.

Police began the forced relocations on Jan. 14 after months of negotiations failed to convince the Jahalin to move voluntarily to the new site.

In May 1995, Israel's supreme court backed Israeli claims the land where the Jahalin have been living is "state" property, while the bedouins say it is owned by Palestinians who gave them permission to set up their camps.

Some 130,000 bedouins live in Israel and the Israeli-controlled areas, mostly in the southern Negev region.

Bedouin living inside Israel have also complained over the years of land confiscations and forcible relocation by Israeli authorities and members of one southern clan launched a violent attack against police in mid-1996 that left some 40 policemen and 30 bedouins hurt.

Qatar welcomes improved ties with Bahrain

DOHA (AFP) — The Qatari cabinet on Wednesday welcomed the improvement in relations between Qatar and Bahrain, which have been strained over a longstanding territorial dispute.

The cabinet welcomed last week's meeting in London between Bahrain's Crown Prince Sheikh Hamad Bin Issa Al-Khalifa and Qatar's Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad Bin Jassem Al-Thani, the official Qatari News Agency (QNA) said. During its weekly meeting, the cabinet also welcomed Bahrain's participation in a meeting here Monday between the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the European Union aimed at forging an elusive free trade agreement.

It was the first time Bahrain had attended a GCC meeting in Qatar since Manama boycotted the regional group's summit in Doha in December.

"The cabinet welcomed everything which is likely to bring the points of view of the two countries closer together and improve their brotherly relations," QNA said.

The cabinet also voiced its "consideration" of a GCC committee tasked with defusing tension between Qatar and Bahrain and hoped for "the success of efforts" aimed at clearing the air between them. The committee, which is made up of the foreign ministers of Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, in January drafted a compromise proposal to ease tension between Qatar and Bahrain.

The proposal does not deal with the dispute itself, which is examined by the International Court of Justice at the Hague (ICJ), but seeks to stop them from engaging in hostile press campaigns and shelter the other's opposition. The conflict is over the Hawar islands, which is held by Bahrain but also claimed by Qatar, and the Qatar region of Zubarah which Bahrain claims. Bahrain's Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammad Bin Mubarak Al-Khalifa said Sunday in Doha that his country preferred the conflict to be settled by the ICJ.

Bahrain had previously protested after Qatar took the dispute to the ICJ in 1991.

Baghdad accuses Ekeus of meddling in state affairs

BAGHDAD (R) — The ruling Baath Party newspaper Al Thawra on Wednesday accused Rolf Ekeus, chairman of the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) on Iraq, of meddling in Baghdad's government affairs.

"He (Ekeus) has no right to give special opinion on the policies of the Iraqi government and on issues outside his mandate," the paper said in a front-page editorial.

It said UNSCOM, set up to oversee the scrapping of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction under the 1991 Gulf war ceasefire, was purely a technical committee.

"This means that Iraqi government policies, stands and attitudes do not fall within Mr. Ekeus' prerogatives."

"But it seems that the former Swedish diplomat is determined to turn his technical tasks into political ones," Al Thawra said. Remarks by Al Thawra came a day before Mr. Ekeus' next trip to Baghdad during which he is expected to hold both political and technical talks with Iraqi leaders.

Al Thawra's criticism fell short of demanding Mr. Ekeus' dismissal as UNSCOM chairman. Babel, the newspaper of President Saddam Hussein's eldest son Uday, on Tuesday called for his sacking. Another

official newspaper last week accused him of "aggressive remarks."

Iraq and the United Nations are locked in dispute over the removal of some 100 wrecked missile engines for analysis to the United States. Iraq would like them to be examined in either Russia or France.

Iraq says it has destroyed all its banned missiles with ranges greater than 150 kilometres but UNSCOM doubts the authenticity of the engines unearthed.

Al Thawra reiterated that Iraq had no more banned missiles left. It said Mr. Ekeus himself did not have evidence to prove his own suspicions.

The paper said Mr. Ekeus' persistence to keep the file of ballistic missiles open was giving the United States the opportunity to continue with its "blind enmity."

"We remind Ekeus that his commission bears moral as well as legal responsibilities...of the adverse impact of the embargo on Iraq and its citizens," Al Thawra said.

Sanctions imposed on Iraq for its 1990 invasion of Kuwait can be lifted only when Mr. Ekeus' commission decides that Iraq has scrapped all of its weapons of mass destruction including missiles with ranges greater than 150 kilometres.

"The doubts formulated by Mr. Ekeus have no concrete basis, but are built on tendentious assumptions

fabricated by the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) and spread by American officials to prolong the embargo" imposed since 1990, Al Thawra said. The Pentagon accused Iraq earlier this month of hiding up to 25 ballistic missiles.

Iran denies report

An Interior Ministry official in Tehran on Wednesday denied reports by a major Iraqi opposition group that said Iraq had massed troops on Iraq's eastern border with Iran.

"This report is not true, it's baseless," the official told the Associated Press. He declined further comment.

The London-based Iraqi National Congress opposition group said Monday that Iraq had moved two army corps — about 30,000 men — to the border, put all army units on maximum alert and ordered officers on leave in the elite Republican Guard to report to their units. Most of the troops were transferred from the northern Kurdish sector, said the Iraqi Broadcasting Corporation, which is run by the INC and operates from northern Iraq.

Iraq and Iran fought a bloody eight-year war that ended with a cease-fire in 1988. But the two have never formally signed a peace treaty and relations remain bitter.

Netanyahu government protests Zeevi's anti-Semitic slap at Indyk

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's cabinet sent a protest letter Wednesday to a far-right member of parliament over anti-Semitic remarks he made about U.S. Ambassador Martin Indyk.

Rehavim Zeevi, a deputy from the extreme-right Mokedet Party, referred to Mr. Indyk during a debate on Monday as a "yid," an anti-Semitic epithet, because of the diplomat's alleged opposition to Jewish settlement activity in East Jerusalem. Mr. Indyk is Jewish.

In a letter addressed to Mr. Zeevi and made available to the press on Wednesday, Mr. Netanyahu's cabinet secretary Danny Naveh said "such statements and anti-Semitic declarations, especially here in Israel and particularly by a public figure, are totally unacceptable."

"The statement ascribed to you is most disturbing, especially as it was targeted at the American ambassador in Israel, Martin Indyk, whom we hold in very high esteem," Mr. Naveh said.

"I hope that you will rectify the situation in the appropriate manner," he said. A spokesman for the Israeli embassy in Tel Aviv said Mr. Indyk had been "profoundly affected" when informed about Mr. Zeevi's remarks.

"When he first heard about it, he said he was extremely offended, as any Jew would be, that such an anti-Semitic remark would be used in describing him," said the spokesman.

The term "yid" translates roughly as "little Jew" or "Jew boy" and was in the past used by right-wing Israelis against former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger for his perceived

anti-Israeli positions.

Mr. Indyk played a central role in U.S. mediation efforts which led to last month's Israeli-Palestinian agreement on handing most of the West Bank town of Hebron over to Palestinian rule, an agreement fiercely opposed by Mokedet and other far-right nationalist movements in Israel.

Mr. Zeevi hit out at Mr. Indyk during a debate about alleged U.S. pressure on Mr. Netanyahu to postpone plans to build a major Jewish neighbourhood in Arab East Jerusalem.

"Bibi (Netanyahu) is going to the master on the other side of the ocean (and) gets phone calls in the week hours of the night from that yid Indyk," Mr. Zeevi was quoted as saying.

Palestinians have warned that the project would undermine newly resumed peace negotiations and spark violent protests.

Jordan's first female taxi driver oozes confidence in pioneering experience

By Jamal Halaby
The Associated Press

AMMAN — In daytime, she keeps a gun under the seat. At night, she often hides a male friend in the trunk of her yellow cab, just in case.

Being the first woman among Jordan's 100,000 taxi drivers is proving quite an adventure for Myassar Abul Hawa. Female cabbies may be commonplace in many countries, but not in this male-dominated Arab country where women's work still usually means raising kids.

"At first, bystanders rub their eyes. Then they clap, whistle and cheer me," Ms. Abul Hawa said. "They can't believe a woman is driving a cab."

Ms. Abul Hawa, 52, has a degree in English literature and worked as a tutor in Beirut. But since fleeing Lebanon's civil war in 1975, she hasn't found similar work. She took the driver's job because she needed money, in part to help support eight children.

After a month on the job, she says she relishes it, especially because it's made her something of a

celebrity in Amman. Children run after her car, and women try to get her to stop and chat.

"She is a unique example that women are capable of carrying out traditionally male-dominated jobs," said Nadia Shamloukh, acting director of the Jordanian Women Federation.

Women make up only 14 per cent of Jordan's one million-member work force. Laws on marriage, divorce and inheritance still favour men, and women are banned from jobs deemed dangerous and from working after dark.

Happily for Ms. Abul Hawa, the law on night work is rarely enforced. She says she has not encountered serious problems at night, except for getting pulled over by bewildered policemen.

"Cops think I am driving a stolen car," she said. "But when I show them my (taxi) driver's licence, they salute me and let me go."

Ms. Abul Hawa has not taken her gun out to face trouble, she said. And her friend in the trunk has never flipped down the back seat to come to her aid — although he did come



Myassar Abul Hawa (photo by Yousef Allar)

out once to convince police she would be safe driving at night.

As for potentially troublesome male riders, she says she could handle them on her own. "I like to argue," she said.

But working in the male-

dominated society has some benefits for Ms. Abul Hawa. She said many devout Muslim men don't want their wives and daughters alone with male cabbies — and call to ask for her by name.

COLUMN

Turkish fan beats wife, tries suicide after loss

ISTANBUL (R) — A Turkish soccer fan beat his wife and then jumped out of a fifth-floor window after his club Fenerbahce lost to Istanbul rival Besiktas in a weekend derby, a newspaper said. The Sabah daily said Ali Sirkecioglu got drunk after his team lost 0-1 at home. He beat unconscious his wife — a Besiktas supporter — then went out onto the balcony of his flat, shouted, "I leave my children to my mother," and jumped. Sirkecioglu suffered broken ribs and legs and was taken to the same hospital as his wife, Semih. She has been discharged. He is in intensive care.

Possible lair of Loch Ness monster found

INVERNESS, Scotland (R) — An auxiliary coast-guard officer thinks he has found the lair of the legendary Loch Ness monster. George Edwards, 45, found the nine-metre wide cave in the bottom of the Scottish Loch on a sonar scan. "I came across the hole by accident one day as I was crossing Urquhart bay while on a coastguard exercise," he told a Scottish news agency. "My sonar reading suddenly fell an extra 30 feet, down to 252 metres. That is much deeper than this part of the loch is supposed to be," Edwards says. The cave could be a breakthrough in the search for the monster, nicknamed Nessie, which many people believe lives in the 37-kilometre long Loch. "For the first time we have a clue to where Nessie might actually live, so we can narrow down the search area and give ourselves a real chance of spotting her and her family," he says. The cave could be the entrance to a tunnel connecting Loch Ness to another loch or the sea, and plans to release a non-toxic dye into the mouth of the opening to test his theory.

Texas agents seize home of missing atheist

AUSTIN, Texas (R) — U.S. Internal Revenue Service (IRS) agents seized the \$231,000 home of Madelyn Murray O'Hair, who disappeared in August 1995. O'Hair, who won the landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision in 1963 calling for an end to school prayer, owes \$250,000 in back taxes, an IRS spokesman said. Agents removed furniture and personal property from the home and evicted Spike Tyson, a member of O'Hair's non-profit organization American Atheists Inc., who had been living there. O'Hair, her granddaughter, Robin Murray O'Hair, and son, Jun Murray, disappeared after telling associates they were going to New York to protest the visit of Pope John Paul II. IRS rules call for O'Hair's property to be sold at auction in 45 days unless she emerges to settle the tax levy.

Future queen on leave from studies

STOCKHOLM (AFP) — The future queen of Sweden, 19-year old Princess Victoria, has taken a break from her studies in France to rule in the absence of her parents, who are on an official visit to South Africa. Under the Swedish constitution the princess, first in line to the Swedish throne, must replace King Carl XVI Gustaf and Queen Silvia when they are away. From Thursday she will represent her country at the opening of the world ski championship in Trondheim, Norway.

Israel names new

AMMAN — Israel has named a new cabinet. The new cabinet was sworn in on Wednesday. The cabinet includes several new faces, including a former opposition leader. The cabinet is expected to focus on economic reforms and improving relations with the Palestinians.

Netanyahu

peace, Jordan to settlement. Netanyahu's government has been criticized for its handling of the peace process. The government's policies have led to increased tensions between Israelis and Palestinians. Netanyahu has vowed to continue the peace process, but critics argue that his government is not doing enough to achieve a lasting settlement.

Abul Ragheb returns

AMMAN — Abul Ragheb has returned to Jordan after spending time in the West Bank. He is expected to continue his work in the region. Ragheb has been a vocal critic of the Israeli government's policies in the West Bank. His return is seen as a sign of continued opposition to the occupation.

Abul Ragheb has been a prominent figure in the Palestinian resistance movement. He has been involved in various activities aimed at ending the Israeli occupation of the West Bank. His return to Jordan is a significant event for many Palestinians.

Abul Ragheb has been a vocal advocate for the rights of Palestinians. He has been involved in numerous protests and demonstrations against the Israeli government. His return to Jordan is seen as a sign of continued commitment to the cause of Palestinian self-determination.

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